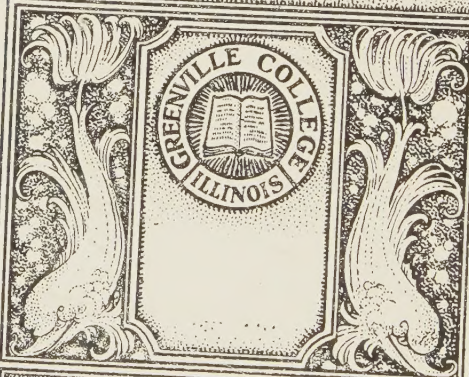




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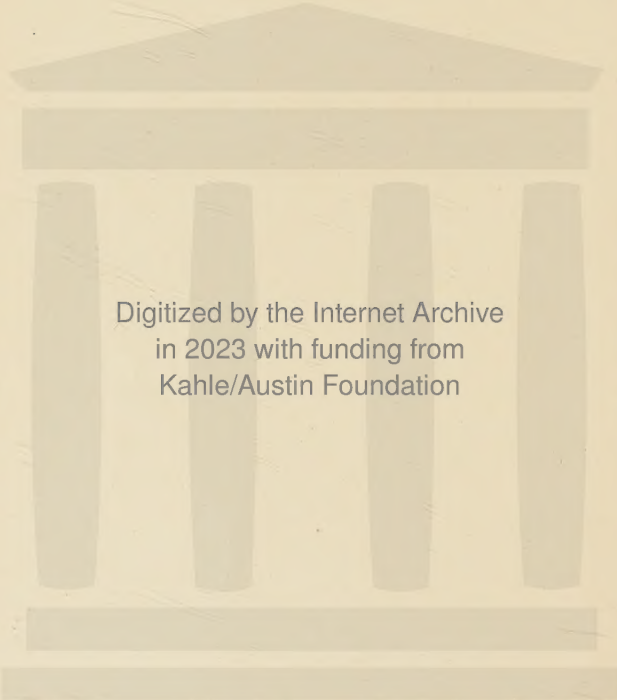
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# A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

BY

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## PREFACE

THIS book attempts to trace within reasonable compass the course of literary development in America, and to present the most significant facts regarding American authors and their works. It places greatest emphasis on general movements because American literature is first of all important as an expression of national life. There are few American writings that require careful analysis and merit intensive study as masterpieces. But in a nation where education has from the first been so generally diffused, literary attempts of slight artistic merit may reflect not only the obvious changes in national life and ideals, but subtler tendencies and aspirations. For this reason attention is given not only to the few greater writers, but to many others whose works, though less important in themselves, are sometimes even more significant. The plan of the book and the decision what to include and what to exclude have been influenced by the author's experiences with college classes; but an attempt has been made to meet the wants of the general reader as well as those of the systematic student.

In tracing tendencies and movements it has been necessary to adopt a geographical classification of authors; and this has sometimes been carried beyond the point where it is significant. It is a matter of the greatest importance whether an author represents the spirit of Puritan New England or the spirit of Cavalier Virginia; it is of little importance whether he chances to write in New Hampshire or in Vermont. For convenience, however, smaller as well as larger groupings have been made on the basis of residence. In adopting this plan the author wishes to disclaim any intention of over-emphasizing sectional differences.

As a general rule the works of living authors have not been discussed in detail. Exception has been made in the case of two or three men whose reputations were achieved many years ago, and whose literary work is evidently done. It would have been easier, and perhaps more satisfactory, to close this history with authors who flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century; but it seemed desirable to add some comment on literary conditions in recent years. Living writers are mentioned as illustrations of schools and tendencies, but no attempt is made to estimate their rank, or to name all who are worthy. Even after this explanation is given it would doubtless be hard to tell why some are included and others are omitted. The author expects no general assent to the judgments in the last chapter; but it is his consolation that the lapse of a few years makes all estimates of contemporary writings seem strange. He trusts that he may live to feel for himself that many things in this section of the book are thoroughly amusing.

W. B. C.

University of Wisconsin,  
April, 1912.

# A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE





## CHAPTER I

### THE COLONIAL TIME (1607-1765)

#### I. THE SOUTHERN COLONIES

THE literature of America was an off-shoot from that of England. If an exact date for the divergence must be given,

**The Beginning  
of American  
Literature**

it may be set at 1607, the year of the founding of the first permanent British colony in the new world. At this time Shakespeare was still writing, and, as will be seen, may have received a suggestion for one play from an American book. The very year of the Jamestown settlement saw the writing or publication of works by Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman, Dekker, Marston, and others of the group who, though they wrote largely in the reign of James, are known as the later Elizabethans. These men did not, however, exert any strong direct influence on their contemporaries who emigrated to the New World. Most of them, it will be noted, are remembered for their writings in two departments of pure literature—the drama and the lyric. The early settlers of Virginia wrote mostly in prose, and they wrote, not as men of letters, but as practical explorers, colonists, business men. They told the story of their adventures, and described the country to which they had come; and if they tried to make their narratives and descriptions attractive it was with a commercial rather than with an esthetic purpose.

But though the connection between Elizabethan literature and these early writers was indirect, it was none the less important. The whole colonization of Virginia was in itself an expression of the spirit and temper of the Elizabethan

time. The love of adventure, the credulity with which men believed in the existence of wealth in every unexplored land, the intense wonder with which they viewed the flora, the fauna, and the inhabitants of their new home, are shown on every page of the history of Jamestown. One does not need to read far in the narratives of almost any of these early Virginian writers before he realizes that here is the same attitude of mind, the same philosophy of life, so often expressed on the Elizabethan stage.

**Influence of the  
Elizabethan  
Spirit**

The earliest American writings were in prose, and English prose had not at this time attained its full development. The day of Euphuism had gone by, and the fashion was setting toward a saner and more vigorous style of writing; but few works had yet appeared which were associated with the evolution of modern prose style. The first book written in America was published three years before the King James version of the *Bible*, four years before any of Bacon's *Essays* took their final form, and a generation before the religious and political writings of Jeremy Taylor and Milton. English prose of this time had a fire and a melody of its own; but even in the hands of men of letters it was likely to be unformed, sometimes ungrammatical, and always lacking in the terseness and finish of a later day. When attempted by untrained literary workers it might lose none of its force, but it was likely to become involved, sometimes even chaotic, in structure.

**Influence of  
English Prose**

All these crude but vigorous qualities are found in the style of the first American writer—Captain John Smith (1580?-1631). It is more than a coincidence that the name which stands first in a history of American literature is that of a man who is known to every schoolboy for different achievements from

**Captain  
John Smith**

those of his pen. In the Elizabethan age men of letters were men of action. Conversely, many men known chiefly for their activities in politics, exploration, or war left writings of value. Indeed, the peculiarities of Elizabethan prose style may be traced largely to the fact that prose was written by men like Sidney, Raleigh, and others who possessed similar energy but slighter literary talent. It is impossible to judge what John Smith wrote without remembering what he did.

The achievements of this man, if his own testimony is to be trusted, are among the most remarkable of modern times. According to his account he was born

**Captain Smith's  
Achievements**

at Willoughby on the flat coast of Lincolnshire. While he was a mere boy his father died, and he was rather shabbily treated by his guardians, who finally apprenticed him to a merchant. The life to which his apprenticeship bound him was distasteful, and at the age of fifteen he ran away and became a soldier of fortune. He fought in France and the low countries; journeyed to Scotland with letters to the king, but had little success as a courtier; went back to Willoughby and lived for some months a hermit in the woods; returned to the continent, where he went through experiences too numerous to mention; was cast overboard from a vessel in the Mediterranean, and picked up by a pirate; took part in an engagement and received his share of the booty; and finally reached the East, the scene of his most marvellous adventures. Here he saw much of the war against the Turks, and in every movement, he tells us, he played a leading part. He was useful to his commander, both in suggesting plots and stratagems, and in actual conflict. One of his most dramatic accounts is that of his combat "to delight the ladies" with three Turks in succession, each of whom he slew and decapitated. Finally he was taken captive

and sent as slave to a Turkish lady of rank. The relations of the two soon became highly romantic—Smith always made a good impression on the other sex. Unfortunately the lady had a cruel brother who treated him with indignity. Finally the Captain killed his tormentor, appropriated his clothes and his horse, and escaped, riding alone many days through the desert. These adventures, but the most important of which have been mentioned, were accomplished before the hero returned to England in 1605, aged about twenty-five years.

For the next year and a half Smith seems to have done nothing noteworthy. Then he comes into view again as one of the most conspicuous of the men who founded the colony at Jamestown. Here he appears, from his own writings and those of his contemporaries, as a bluff, quarrelsome, energetic man, afraid of no one, sometimes under arrest, once in danger of execution, but generally coming out victor, and showing himself perhaps the most sagacious, practical manager in the whole settlement. He directed the palisading of the fort, explored the rivers and the surrounding country, traded and treated with the Indians, and at the same time took his part in all the intestine broils that characterized the first months of the colony.

**Smith's First  
Book**

It was here, too, that he found time, with all his other labors, to write what so far as we know was his first book, and what was certainly the first English book written in a permanent American settlement—*A True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia since the first planting of that Collony, which is now resident in the South part thereof, till the last retorne from thence.*

This work, perhaps written with no thought of its publication, contains a history of the first months of the settlement, with a description of the country and its inhabitants.



It is not a long work, occupying but forty pages of rather coarse type in Mr. Arber's reprint; though it is possible that the proprietors of the colony suppressed some of Smith's frank statements. Very likely its composition was begun in 1607, soon after the expedition landed. The manuscript was taken to England in the early summer of 1608, and printed later in the same year.

During the rest of his stay in Virginia Smith wrote but one other work of importance—*A Map of Virginia, with a Description of the Countrey the Commodities, People, Government and Religion.*

**Smith's Later Writings**

This contains little narrative, but is a description of the country, its physical features, climate, plants, animals, and inhabitants. It was sent to England, probably late in the year 1608, but was not published until 1612, and then, somewhat strangely, at the University Press, Oxford. At the same time with the *Map of Virginia* Smith sent a letter to the London proprietors of the colony, answering sharply their demands for immediate financial returns.

John Smith returned to England in 1609, and remained there till 1614, when he again sailed to America and made a map of the coast from Cape Cod to the Penobscot. In 1615 he started for New England with a colony, but the expedition met disaster at the hands of French pirates. After his escape from his captors and his return to England he devoted himself to writing, producing a considerable number of works. Among those which have reference to America are: *A Description of New England*, 1616; *New Englands Trials*, 1620, 1622; *The General Historie of Virginia*, 1624; *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England, or Anywhere*, 1631. His autobiography, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine John Smith*, was written about a year before his death, which occurred in 1631.

The only authority for the early adventures of Captain Smith is this autobiography. His statements regarding his exploits are therefore hard to prove or disprove; but it is safe to say that, though they evidently have some basis in fact, many of the details overtax credulity. When we come to his experiences in Virginia there are other accounts that may be compared with his own. These all show that, whether he was a braggart or not, he was probably the one man among the helpless adventurers at Jamestown who was really equal to the occasion. But even in the American narrative it is obvious that he delights in the use of the pronoun "I," the monotony of which he varies by frequent references to "Captain Smith"; and there is strong reason for believing that some of the experiences that he relates have little or no basis in fact. The one which has aroused most discussion is the story of his rescue by Pocahontas. In the *True Relation*, written soon after he was captured and taken to Powhatan, he speaks of that monarch as most friendly, and in another connection refers to Pocahontas as a mere child. The first reference to the rescue was made in a letter which Smith wrote to Queen Anne in 1616, when he was living in obscurity, while the "Indian Princess," now married to John Rolfe, was attracting much attention in London. It is possible that the account of Powhatan's hostility was omitted from the *True Relation* in order not to frighten immigrants; but it is much more likely that the story was coined to connect the hero's name with that of a social celebrity.

Except for the fact that John Smith was the first American writer, his place in the world of letters is unimportant.

It must be remembered, however, that few of his English contemporaries who confined themselves to prose won high literary rank. Even as prose, his writings are by no means devoid of merit.

### Smith's Veracity

### Smith's Literary Merits

In his later work, written when he had more leisure, and looked on life in a calmer way, there are sentences that possess the true Elizabethan melody:

Who can desire more content, that hath small meanes; or but only his merit to advance his fortune, then to tread, and plant that ground hee hath purchased by the hazard of his life? If he have but the taste of virtue and magnanimitie, what to such a minde can bee more pleasant, then planting and building a foundation for his Posteritie, gotte from the rude earth, by God's blessing and his owne industrie, without prejudice to any? If hee have any graine of faith or zeale in Religion, what can hee doe lesse hurtfull to any: or more agreeable to God then to seeke to convert those poore Salvages to know Christ, and humanitie, whose labors with discretion will tripple requite thy charge and paines? What so truely sutes with honour and honestie, as the discovering things unknowne? erecting Townes, peopling Countries, informing the ignorant, reforming things unjust, teaching virtue; and gaine to our Native mother-countrie a kingdom to attend her: finde imployment for those that are idle, because they know not what to doe: so farre from wronging any, as to cause Posteritie to remember thee; and remembering thee, ever honour that remembrance with praise?

In the works produced in America such passages as this are hardly to be found. The circumstances that repressed literary activity in the colonies, and that in some measure have crippled American literature almost to the present, began to make themselves felt at once. The *True Relation* and the *Map of Virginia* must have been written hastily, at odd moments, in the midst of fatiguing physical toil and mental anxiety. Both are, for the most part, plain blunt narratives and descriptions of what the author had himself seen. There was not time even for such obvious generalizations as are found in the paragraph quoted above. In the *True Relation*, especially, narrative clauses often crowd each other, as in the following:

The two and twenty day of Aprill, Captain Newport and myselfe with divers others, to the number of twenty two persons, set forward to discover the River, some fiftie or sixtie miles, finding it in some places broader, and in some narrower, the Countrie (for the moste

part) on each side plaine high ground, with many fresh Springes, the people in all places kindly intreating us, daunsing and feasting us with strawberries, Mulberries, Bread, Fish, and other their Countrie provisions whereof we had plenty: for which Captaine Newport kindly requited their least favours with Bels, Pinnes, Needles beades, or Glasses, which so contented them that his liberallitie made them follow us from place to place, and ever kindly to respect us.

Prose like this violates most rhetorical conventionalities, but it is perfectly clear. Smith is an example of the unlearned pioneer and adventurer who writes because he has something to say, and whose straightforwardness saves him from ambiguity.

William Strachey was a colonist of a different sort. Though little is known of his life he was evidently a man of some prominence and experience in political affairs, who in 1610 came to Virginia with Sir Thomas Gates, was secretary of the colony for about three years, and afterward returned to England. On the journey over Sir Thomas Gates's fleet was scattered in a storm, and his own ship, on which Strachey was a passenger, was wrecked on the Bermudas. From these islands the survivors escaped in rude vessels of their own construction, and reached Jamestown nearly a year after they first set out. Strachey's chief work written in America is an account of the hardships of this voyage, entitled *A true Reportory of the Wracke, and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knight; upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas: his Comming to Virginia, and the Estate of that Colonie then, and after, under the Government of the Lord La Warre*. This pamphlet was written in 1610, and printed in London before the close of the same year. It has for us an intrinsic interest as one of the strongest specimens of prose to be found among Southern colonial writings; and perhaps even greater interest from the fact that some Shakespearean scholars believe it to have furnished sug-



gestions for "The Tempest." The claim can hardly be proved or disproved; but even a casual reader will notice correspondences between parts of the narrative and scenes of the play.\*

Strachey was a man of some education and culture, though probably not a trained writer. His *Wracke and Redemption* shows a conscious striving after effect such as might be expected of a man of literary inexperience who was trying to narrate a terrible occurrence. His *Historie of Travaile into Virginia Brittania*, partly written and partly compiled after his return to England, is plodding and uninspired.

A later official of the colony was George Sandys (1577-1644), who held the position of treasurer from 1621 to 1624 or 1625. At the time of his appointment he was engaged on a translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and had already completed five books. After his arrival in Virginia he translated the remaining ten books, and the whole was published in 1626, after his return to England. It is one of the more notable of that group of translations of which Chapman's *Homer* is perhaps the best known example, and for many years was given high rank by critics and scholars. In the dedication of the completed volume, addressed to King Charles, the author says:

It needeth more than a single denization, being a double stranger; sprung from the stock of the ancient Romanes, but bred in the new world, of the rudeness whereof it cannot but participate, especially having wars and tumults to bring it to light instead of the Muses.

Very likely the work did suffer from the circumstances in which it was written; but it would puzzle a student to find any particular in which the translation is indebted to America, or to distinguish in manner between the ten books done here and the five completed in England. The connec-

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\*A fair and concise statement of the evidence on this question is given in the Variorum edition of the play, edited by Dr. Horace Howard Furness.

tion of Sandys with Virginia should be remembered chiefly as a reminder that official appointment sometimes brought to the New World men of high scholarship and real literary gift.

Smith, Strachey, and Sandys typify three important classes of early writers—the unlettered adventurer who wrote with little thought of form, the gentleman in public life who attempted a literary record of his experiences, and the scholar whose work continued the same here as in England. The first two of these classes contained many representatives. In an age when everything connected with America excited so much interest and wonder, every emigrant who could guide a pen was likely to attempt, for private friends at least, some account of what he saw. So great was the demand for news from America that many of these private letters, as well as writings intended for publication, found their way into print. Some of these are only less notable—indeed some may be even more readable—than those of Smith and Strachey; but most of them do not merit consideration in a literary history.

Mention should be made, however, of Alexander Whitaker (1585-1613?), "The Apostle of Virginia." Whitaker was a clergyman, a Cambridge graduate, who in 1611 resigned his living in the north of England to come as a missionary to the Indians, and who labored faithfully at various places in the colony until his death some five or six years later. His *Good News from Virginia*, which appeared in London in 1613, contains some description of the country, but treats especially of the natives and their moral and spiritual condition. Its object was to convince the English people that the Indian was not merely a curious animal, but a rational human being, for whom as a fellow-man they were responsible. John Pory (1570?-1635?), another Cambridge man, was a more amusing if a less edifying writer. He came to America

### Three Types of Writers

### Early Minor Writers

under different circumstances, being presumably sent by his family because his drunkenness made him inconvenient at home. In his earlier years, about 1600, he was engaged in historical studies and in preparing translations of works of travel under the direction of Richard Hakluyt. In America his indolence and his bad habits kept him from writing much, but he left an account of three excursions among the Indians, reprinted by Smith in his *General Historie*, and a gossipy letter to Sir Dudley Carleton. As an observer he seems to have had a way of looking on the odd and amusing side of things, and though he could not be classed as a humorist there is a touch of facetiousness about all his work.

The writings produced during the first twenty years of the Jamestown colony, though meagre, were more than could be expected from men in such circumstances; and a contemporary would have seemed justified in predicting that, with more leisure and fewer hardships, a distinctive American literature would arise in that part of the continent to which they belonged. Such a prediction, if made, was never

#### Later Literary Development

fulfilled. After the first half-generation of settlement there was no continuous development of literature in the South. The few works that did appear for the next one hundred and forty years were sporadic and unrelated. The reasons for this literary poverty were of two classes—those depending on the character of the colonists and those depending on their environment.

The early immigrants to the Southern colonies differed widely in morals and in social position, but they agreed in one respect: with few exceptions they came

#### Characteristics of Southern Colonists

to the New World for the sole purpose of bettering themselves in a material way. They were not, like the pioneers in Massachusetts, devotees to a principle, but adventurers, some in a good and

some in a bad sense of that term. Most of them came with the idea of returning to England as soon as they had acquired a competence; and those who stayed considered themselves, at least for a generation or two, not primarily Virginians or South Carolinians, but Englishmen sojourning in the wilderness. Such men did not feel called upon to produce much in the way of literature. The drama, the lyric, and lighter forms of writing that are associated with a life of polite leisure could not be expected during the period of hardship. The adventures of the early colonists, romantic as they seem to us, were such stern realities for all concerned that no one had time to be a laureate. Perhaps, too, the romantic element, as in the case of the Pocohontas story, has been mostly added by the imagination of later narrators. Love and war, it is sometimes said, are the great stimuli to literature. War there was, of a sort, but the Indian conflicts were not of a nature to call forth an *Iliad*; and love was not likely to inspire a poet while the planters' wives were imported girls secured from the ship-masters on payment of their passage-money.

There was not even an incentive to the more matter-of-fact kinds of writing. The Pilgrim felt, from the first day of his outward voyage, that he was founding a Commonwealth, and that upon him devolved the duty of writing its history for posterity. The Virginian felt no such duty to his new and probably temporary home. In politics the Virginian was usually a Royalist, and in religion an Episcopalian. In both he occupied traditional, conservative ground, which to his mind needed no defense or apology unless attacked. There was no temptation, therefore, to publish controversial pamphlets and sermons. All that the early settler could be expected to do was to write narratives of his adventures, and descriptions of the country, and this is what he did.

By the time that the colonies became established, and men

were proud to consider themselves Virginians, the causes of the second class, those arising from the circumstances of life, repressed literary activity. Chief among these **Circumstances of Southern Life** was the lack of education. The plantation system, which was made possible in Virginia by the great number of navigable rivers, tended to the isolation of each family. Neighbors lived so far apart that common schools would have been impossible, even if the government had wished to establish them. Small children could be educated only by private tutors, and these were expensive and hard to secure. Under these conditions the Southerners came to consider education unnecessary, and acquiesced in the plans of the royal governors, who discouraged it as a menace to their power. As a result, the state of learning, even in families of wealth and real refinement, was almost incredibly low. William and Mary, long the only public educational institution in the South, was dignified by the name of a college, but really devoted itself mostly to instruction in elementary branches. A few sons of wealthy families were sent to English universities, where, if tradition is true, they learned chiefly the dissipations and accomplishments of an English gentleman. Many members of even well-to-do families could hardly read or write.

The repressive policy of the government extended not only to schools but to the printing press. There was virtually no printing in Virginia for over a hundred years, and but one printing house until ten years before the Revolution. Southern writings, if published at all, were sent to London.

One other tendency must be noticed, which in its operation both repressed the production of writings in the South and restricted the circulation of those that were produced. Following a notion current to some extent in England during the eighteenth century, the Southern gentleman felt that literature was not exactly a reputable profession. It was



proper for him to write, to circulate manuscript copies of his writings among his friends, and to have them neatly engrossed on parchment and so transmitted to his children; but it was not quite dignified to have them printed, certainly not to print them for gain. At the same time the lack of facilities for printing in the colonies discouraged less punctilious authors, who might be financially unable to publish abroad. It may be conjectured that many works were written which, remaining in manuscript, have been lost in the ravages of three wars, or by the destructive accidents of two hundred years. True, this private and amateur authorship has not, in recent times, led to the best literary results. It is not probable that any great American epics or tragedies were lost to the world through the modesty of their authors; but it is very likely that works remained unpublished that were quite as important as some that are mentioned in this history.

The dependence on England for education and for publishing facilities, together with the general attitude of Southerners toward the mother country, accounts for the most notable characteristic of Southern colonial literature—namely, its connection with English rather than with American models. There was no “school” of Virginian writers. It can hardly be said that any Virginian book influenced any other Virginian book. At any given time, however, the writings of Virginia gentlemen were certain to show the influence of contemporary or recent literary fashions in England.

This characteristic is seen in the *Burwell Papers*. This name has been given to an anonymous manuscript which was found in the possession of the Burwell family in Virginia, and which deals with the civil disturbance of 1676, known as

**Southern Attitude Toward Literature**

**Southern Writers Imitated English Models**

Bacon's rebellion. From internal evidence it appears to have been written by an adherent, though not a strong partisan, of the royal governor, at a period not far subsequent to the events of which it treats.

**Burwell  
Papers**

The most noticeable peculiarity of the style is the excessive use of conceits, puns, artificial balances, and all the other mannerisms found in the Restoration prose at its worst. The following passage, stating the assumption of leadership by Ingram after Bacon's death, illustrates the intolerable prolixity of the author:

The Lion had no sooner made his exitt, but the Ape (by indubitable right) steps upon the stage. Bacon was no sooner removed by the hand of good providence, but another steps in, by the wheele of fickle fortune. The Countrey had, for som time, bin guided by a company of knaves, now it was to try how it would behave it selfe under a foole. Bacon had not long bin dead, (though it was a long time before som would beleive that he was dead) but one Ingram (or Isgrum, which you will) takes up Bacons Commission (or ells by the patterne of that cuts him out a new one) and as though he had bin his natureall heire, or that Bacons Commission had bin granted not onely to him selfe, but to his Executors, Administraters, and Assignes, he (in the Millitary Court) takes out a Probit of Bacons will, and proclames him selfe his Successer.

In the latter part of the manuscript are two poems on the death of Bacon, in rhymed pentameter verse, which likewise show the author's devotion to contemporary English models.

Among the literary curiosities dating from a slightly later time is a little booklet now much sought by collectors, published in London in 1708, and bearing the

**The Sot-Weed  
Factor**

title *The Sot-Weed Factor, or a Voyage into Maryland. A Satyr. By Eben. Cook, Gent.*

Sot-Weed will be recognized as an uncomplimentary name for tobacco. A factor was a merchant or, more accurately, an agent who handled wares for a principal at home. It is not known who Ebenezer Cook was, or whether this was his real name; but in the poem he represents himself as such a

factor, who had come to Maryland to barter for the chief product of the plantations. On first landing he notices the hospitality of the planters, even then proverbial; but the entertainment furnished is not much to his liking. After leaving the host who first entertains him the factor sets off on his business, and in the narrative of his adventures satirizes the law courts, the inns, and all classes of the inhabitants, especially the Quakers. One of these he describes in lines perhaps the most frequently quoted of any in the poem:

While riding near a Sandy Bay,  
I met a *Quaker*, *Yea* and *Nay*;  
A Pious Conscientious Rogue,  
As e'er wear Bonnet or a Brogue,  
Who neither Swore nor kept his Word,  
But cheated in the Fear of God;  
And when his Debts he would not pay,  
By Light within he ran away.

By trusting this Friend the factor is defrauded of all his goods. His efforts to recover them give occasion for further comments on the provincial courts and lawyers; and the victim, now penniless, returns home, leaving a curse on the whole country. In the absence of any knowledge regarding the author it is impossible to say what was the occasion of the poem, or how far the satire was inspired by malice. It gives the impression of being a shrewd caricature of some of the prevailing evils of the time. In form it shows evident influence of *Hudibras*, which by 1700 was the model for burlesque satire; but it lacks the forced rhymes and the clever turns of phrase which characterize Butler's masterpiece.

At a later date there appeared in Maryland other poems which have been ascribed to Ebenezer Cook. The most notable of these was a political satire, which was published at Annapolis in 1730, and which bore the title *Sotweed Redivivus: or the Planters Looking-Glass. In Burlesque Verse*.

*Calculated for the Meridian of Maryland. By E. C. Gent.*

It is probable, however, that this is the work of some other satirist, who sought to attract attention by adopting the metrical form of a popular poem and the initials of its author. Indeed, it is by no means certain that Ebenezer Cook was really a resident of Maryland, though the vividness of his descriptions shows that he must have visited the colony.

The most important Southern writer of the early eighteenth century was William Byrd (1674-1744). Of the

**William Byrd** authors who have thus far been mentioned

Byrd was the first who was a native of America. He was the son of a prominent and wealthy Virginian family. He was sent to England and the Continent for his education, studied law at the Middle Temple, was called to the bar, and was honored with membership in the Royal Society. After his return to America he lived on the family estate at Westover. Here, besides managing his extensive private interests he served the public in various capacities. He was a member of the commission which in 1728 established the boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina, and an account of his experiences during this survey is the most valuable of his writings. These writings were not intended for publication, but were handed down to the author's descendants in a manuscript volume carefully engrossed and bound under his direction. This collection, sometimes known as the *Westover Manuscripts*, contains, besides "The History of the Dividing Line," "A Journey to the Land of Eden," "A Progress to the Mines," and "An Essay on Bulk Tobacco." The last-named essay may not be Byrd's own work. The papers were not printed until 1841.

Colonel Byrd seems to have been regarded, both in his own and in succeeding generations, as an example of the highest type of Southern gentleman. He was a man of

culture and social charm. He collected a private library, said to have been the largest in Virginia, and his writings show that he had an appreciation of literature, and a fondness for gaining—and sometimes for displaying—odd bits of curious information. On his travels through the colonies he was a close observer, and he showed the catholic interest of an eighteenth century gentleman in matters of economic, historical, and scientific importance. “The History of the Dividing Line” gives much valuable information regarding the country, and the plants, animals, and natural curiosities, but it is most interesting for the shrewd comments on men and their ways, and for the revelation that it gives of the author’s own character.

Byrd’s style is that of a man who had read and enjoyed the work of Addison and his contemporaries. While the New England writers were still adhering to the crabbed and pedantic manner of an earlier century, Byrd succeeded in writing prose that, though not remarkable for grace, had something of urbane charm. He occasionally indulged in the coarse jests that an eighteenth century Englishman seemed to think necessary, but in many other passages he showed a fine and genuine humor. All in all, his writings, though they have sometimes been absurdly over-praised, are among the most pleasantly readable of the colonial time.

Besides the representative writings already mentioned, the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw

the production of a considerable number of  
**Minor Virginia** other works written by Virginians and chiefly  
**Writers** about Virginia. Perhaps the most readable

of the early narratives is *A Voyage to Virginia*, by Colonel Norwood. Little is known of the author except that he was one of the disheartened royalists who fled to America in 1649 after the execution of the king. On the way his party endured almost incredible privations on sea and land, being



forced at last to eat the bodies of their comrades who died of starvation. The story is a valuable one for its illustration of the hardships through which early colonists passed. It is also interesting for the picture which the author unconsciously gives of himself. A partisan of Cromwell would enjoy this revelation of one royalist, with his thoughts, even among the most appalling dangers, all fixed on the good things of this world—with his appreciation of the physical charms of women, his love of good things to eat, and his shameless selfishness in gratifying his own appetite when his companions were dying of starvation about him. In 1724 the Reverend Hugh Jones (1669-1760), a professor in William and Mary college, published *The Present State of Virginia*. Professor Jones's literary method may be inferred from the fact that he entitled one chapter "Of the Habits, Customs, Parts, Employments, Trade of the Virginians; and of the Weather, Coin, Sickness, Liquors, Servants, Poor, Pitch, Tar, Oar, &c." He succeeded, however, in giving much valuable information, intermixed with many naive comments. By the beginning of the eighteenth century some thoughtful Virginians began to turn attention to the history of their colony. Robert Beverley (1675?-1716?) received his inspiration to historical study while completing his education in England, and brought out a history of Virginia in 1705. An enlarged version appeared in 1722. Like most histories of this time, the book contains a variety of geographical and miscellaneous information. Probably the most interesting section of the history is Part II, which treats of "The natural Productions and Conveniences of the Country, suited to Trade and Improvement." Beverley was a keen observer, with almost a poet's fondness for nature, combined with some of the explorer's love of the venturesome and the marvellous. In 1747 William Stith (1689-1755) published at Williamsburg *The History of the First Discovery and Settlement of*

*Virginia*, covering the first sixteen years of the Jamestown settlement. For facts, he depends largely on John Smith's *General Historie*. His style is less attractive than that of Beverley. Mention must also be made of James Blair (1656-1743), the founder and first president of William and Mary college. He was graduated at the University of Edinburgh and came to Virginia in 1685. His published writings, the chief of which is a series of one hundred and seventeen sermons on the Sermon on the Mount, are unimportant, but he was probably the greatest intellectual force in early Virginia.

Published writings in the Southern colonies other than Virginia and Maryland were few. They consisted mostly

**Writers in  
Other Colonies**

of descriptions of the country, written to attract emigrants, pamphlets inspired by local or intercolonial disputes, and occasional sermons. Professor Moses Coit Tyler, after an exhaustive study, chose as representative of this extra-Virginian literature John Lawson of North Carolina, Alexander Garden of South Carolina, and Patrick Tailfer of Georgia. Lawson (?-1712) came to America in 1700 and was surveyor-general of North Carolina. His writings are descriptions of his travels and explorations, given with more spirit than characterizes most such narratives. Alexander Garden (1685?-1756), who must not be confounded with two other South Carolinians of the same name, was an Episcopalian clergyman in Charleston about the middle of the eighteenth century. His literary work consisted of published sermons and letters directed against George Whitefield, the evangelist. Patrick Tailfer seems to have been the most prominent of a group of men who had quarrelled with the government of Georgia, and having left the colony, probably under compulsion, devoted themselves to publishing attacks upon Oglethorpe. They managed their case with considerable shrewdness and occasionally handled satire with effect.

## II. THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIES. FIRST PERIOD, 1620-1676

In the earliest writings of the New England colonies are to be found the real beginnings of American letters. In a search for the origin of what is best, and especially of what is weakest in our national literature, the student of tendencies is led back at last to the crude writings of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. Strong as have been the influences of English and at times of Continental writers, it is easy to trace a continuous development from these pioneers in authorship to the New England of to-day.

### **The Real Beginnings of American Literature**

That this is true will be no surprise to the reader who recalls the outlines of New England history. The men who founded the two colonies now within the limits of Massachusetts came to the New World not primarily for gain, but in support of a principle. We shall err if in accepting

### **Characteristics of New England Colonists**

this fact we allow our fancy to idealize these pioneers too much. Among even the earliest there were undoubtedly men who had an eye to the advantages that might be gained by exploiting the wilderness; and human nature is such that even the most rapt and devout divine may be a very practical hand at a bargain, and a very shrewd politician. But with all their inconsistencies the Pilgrims and the Puritans were men who had very serious and on the whole very high ideals of life and of the part that God destined them to play in it. Especially was this true of the leaders of thought, the men who were most likely to write. Judging simply from the character of these men, we expect, what we find, a considerable body of serious and well-considered writings.

It was natural that men like the founders of New England

should do all that was possible to encourage education. From the first grammar schools were required by law in every community; Harvard college was founded in 1636, and the whole influence of church and state was exerted to secure the diffusion of learning. The result was, first, a body of readers almost co-extensive with the population; and, second, a number of specially trained young men from whom the ranks of authorship were recruited.

Side by side with the influence of educational institutions worked that of the printing press. A press was set up in Cambridge as early as 1639. Others followed soon after. And, though they were hampered by a strict church censorship, they put forth great quantities of such literature as was allowed.

Both political and economic conditions made New England largely dependent on herself for such writings as she wanted. To the Puritan, the great body of the glorious literary work of the Elizabethan age was forbidden by the discipline of his church. His own party, prolific as it was in controversialists, produced few literary men of preeminent distinction. The sermons and pamphlets written in New England were not notably inferior to those of Old England, and often were better adapted to local needs. Moreover, the influx of immigrants from the mother country was mostly confined to one decade, from 1630 to 1640. With the triumph of the Puritan party in England the necessity of emigration ceased. After the later date it has been estimated that the immigrants to New England were fewer in number than the persons who returned to the mother country. The result was that the colonies became isolated. Their wants were few, and from the first they had encouraged arts and manufactures. They imported little. In every way the

**Education in  
New England**

**English Influence Slight**

citizen of Massachusetts was far more remote from England than the Virginian, who annually loaded a ship with tobacco at his own wharf, and received from the same ship at its return even the simplest articles of household use.

In no department of life was this isolation more complete or fraught with more serious results than in that of letters. To the time of the Revolution the influence of English on New England literature was slight, indirect, and exerted by authors of inferior merit. It is not known that a copy of Shakespeare was brought to New England until 1709, and none was offered for sale until 1722. Even Milton seems to have been ignored by the Puritans in America. There is no record of a copy of his works in New England before 1700, and no edition was printed in that section of the country until 1796. Standing thus aloof from all that was best in the literature that could do them the greatest good or harm, Americans carried on for a hundred and fifty years the traditions that they brought with them. Students of language know that New England pronunciations, odd forms, and many so-called "Americanisms" are really survivals of English usage at the time of James the First. It is little more difficult to trace some of the peculiarities of our literature back to the Puritan pamphleteers. The broader genial influence of the Elizabethans died out in Virginia; the narrow but intense spirit of the controversialists lived in New England, and after all the cosmopolitanism of the last hundred years may be seen in American literature to-day.

At first glance it may seem strange that two colonies, both founded by Englishmen within the same quarter of a century, should differ so widely in literary ideals as did Virginia and Massachusetts. The explanation of this difference can be found both in the changed conditions in England and in the differences between the men who emigrated to the North and to the

#### Nature of English Influence



South. The years just following 1607 were one of those transition periods in English literature when the writers of one generation pass away and the nation seems waiting for their successors. In the thirteen years between the founding of Jamestown and the founding of Plymouth there died Shakespeare, Beaumont, Raleigh, Sackville, Daniel, and Hakluyt; in the next decade, before the founding of Massachusetts Bay, these were followed by Bacon, Giles and John Fletcher, Lodge, Middleton, and Purchas. Of the few writers who remained, like Jonson, Drayton, and Donne, most had done their best work. In the same period were born Milton, Samuel Butler, Jeremy Taylor, Baxter, Bunyan, Evelyn, Marvell, Suckling, Lovelace, Cowley, and Vaughan—the majority of the men who are remembered in the literary history of the seventeenth century. Between the later writings of the first group and the earlier writings of the second there was a gap, a period when English literature was least fitted to exert helpful influence on colonial writings.

Nor were the Puritans likely to be much affected by even the best work that continued the Elizabethan tradition. In their revolt against corruption they protested against the forms of literature in which this corruption was sometimes expressed. Their thoughts were on matters of religion; and partly because of their influence it was mainly theological writings that filled the literary interregnum of the early seventeenth century. In the reign of James I, more than in any other period of English history, religion was fashionable. The king himself, his courtiers, and writers of all lesser degrees of rank discussed sacred subjects, and when they treated secular subjects, made use of a cant, a phraseology and imagery borrowed from the Bible and from sacred things. The numerous dissertations that show these characteristics are now devoid of interest except to the special student; none of them has held a place in literature. But

they were the models for the first writings produced in New England.

The first literary impulse of any people emigrating to a new land is to write the story of their experiences, and the description of the country that they find. In the case of the Virginians this impulse expressed itself in brief and hastily written accounts sent back to England for immediate publication.

**The Historical Impulse**

In New England its most important manifestation took a different form. To the mind of the Puritan the fact that he was a servant of God, founding a nation for God, in the wilderness, gave an importance to his every act. He realized, therefore, that a record of these acts would be valuable to posterity; and accordingly he wrote, not for the London public of the hour, but for the reader of that future when his deeds would be appreciated. In thus turning his attention to history he carried out one of the few tendencies of the later Elizabethan time with which he could sympathize. The first quarter of the seventeenth century was especially prolific in historical writings, of which Raleigh's *History of the World*, Daniel's *Wars of the Roses*, and Bacon's *History of Henry VII*, are among those best remembered. As the authors of these works were many of them high in the affairs of the nation, so the first historians of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay were governors of their respective colonies.

William Bradford (1588-1657), the second governor of Plymouth, though but thirty-two years old when he landed from the Mayflower, had been with the Pilgrims throughout their experiences in Holland, and had taken an active part in the delibera-

**William Bradford**

tions that resulted in their coming to America. His first writing in the new world was done in collaboration with Edward Winslow, with whom he kept a journal of the first

thirteen months of the colony. This was sent to England immediately upon its completion, and was published in London in 1622. As it was issued without the authors' names and bore a prefatory note signed "G. Mourt" it came to be known as *Mourt's Relation*, and is still sometimes referred to by that title. Bradford's most important work, however, was the *History of Plymouth Plantation*, begun in 1630, and continued for nearly twenty years. The first book of the history treats of the rise of the dissenters, the persecutions that induced them to flee to Holland, their experiences there, their reasons for desiring to come to America, and finally of the voyage of the Mayflower. The remainder of the work covers the period from 1620 to 1646 inclusive, and is in the form of annals.

That the *History of Plymouth* was written for posterity is shown by the author's disposition of the manuscript. Throughout his life, so far as is known, he made no move toward giving it to the public. At his death it passed to a nephew, and so descended through various hands until the Revolution, when it disappeared, and its loss was long mourned by historians. In 1855 it was discovered in the library of the Bishop of London, and has since been restored to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Throughout his history the author introduces copies of letters and of official documents, and evidently strives to leave an impartial record. The narrative is usually plain and straight-forward, but both matter and manner are tinged with the fanaticism of the day. To the writer's mind every event that favors the Pilgrims or confounds their enemies is the result of a direct intervention of Providence.

And I may not omite hear a spetiall worke of Gods providence. Ther was a proud & very profane yonge man, one of the sea-men, of a iustie, able body, which made him the more hauty; he would allway be contemning the poore people in their siknes, & cursing them dayly with greevous execrations, and did not let to tell them,

that he hoped to help to cast halfe of them over board before they came to their jurneys end, and to make mery with what they had; and if he were by any gently reprov'd, he would curse and swear most bitterly. But it plased God before they came halfe seas over, to smite this yong man with a greeveous disease, of which he dyed in a desperate maner, and so was him selfe the first that was throwne overbord. Thus his curses light on his owne head.

Of the destruction of the Pequots he writes:

Those that scaped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, others rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatche, and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400. at this time. It was a fearfull sight to see them thus frying in the fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stinck & sente ther of; but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prays thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enimise in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud & insulting an enimie.

This is in the manner of an Hebrew historian. It was, indeed, the *Old Testament* and the *Book of Revelation*, rather than the milder gospels and epistles, which chiefly influenced the literary expression of early New England. In 1646, looking with astonishment at the success of the Puritan party in England, Bradford breaks into this strain of triumph:

Full litle did I thinke that the downfall of the Bishops, with their courts, cannons, & ceremonies, &c. had been so neare, when I first begane these scribled writings (which was aboute the year 1630, and so peeced up at times of leasure afterward), or that I should have lived to have seene or heard of the same; but it is the Lords doing, and ought to be marvelous in our eyes! Every plante which mine heavenly father hath not planted (saith our Saviour) shall be rooted up. Mat: 15. 13. I have snared the, and thou art taken, O Babell (Bishops), and thou wast not aware; thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord. Jer. 50. 24. . . .

But who hath done it? Who, even he that siteth on the white horse, who is caled faithfull, & true, and judgeth and fighteth righteously, Rev: 19. 11. whose garments are dipte in blood, and his name

was caled the word of God, v. 13. for he shall rule them with a rode of iron; for it is he that treadeth the winepress of the feircenes and wrath of God almighty. And he hath upon his garments, and upon his thigh, a name writen, The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. v. 15, 16. Hallelu-iah.

The first governor and the first historian of the colony at Massachusetts Bay was John Winthrop (1588-1649). Like many of the early Puritans, he was a person of some weight in England, a member of a good family, a lawyer, and a man of considerable wealth. Such a person, even when moved by the deepest religious impulses, naturally looks at life more broadly than a man like Bradford, whose experiences since childhood had been closely bound up with the persecutions of a despised sect. This difference in point of view may be traced in his history. There is less of the rhapsodical use of scriptural phraseology, more of the calm and matter-of-fact treatment of events. That Winthrop was capable of true eloquence when occasion demanded is shown by his speech delivered on the occasion of his arraignment for some alleged usurpation of power in his office as governor. In this he speaks with the system and logic of a trained lawyer, and with the high devotion to an ideal that always characterized him as a man. The style of his *History of New England* is partly determined by the fact that the narrative is in the form of a diary. The first entry begins "Easter Monday, March 29, 1630. Riding at the Cowes, near the Isle of Wight, in the Arbella, a ship of three hundred and fifty tons," and the last is in the year 1649. As is usual in a journal of this kind kept by a busy man, the scale is far from uniform, but most events of importance are at least mentioned, and many are discussed at some length. There is always a fascination in the reading of a journal, arising from the incongruity of events that are by chance brought together. The following are successive entries :



Thomas Morton adjudged to be imprisoned, till he were sent into England, and his house burnt down, for his many injuries offered to the Indians, and other misdemeanours. Capt. Brook, master of the Gift, refused to carry him.

Finch, of Watertown, had his wigwam burnt and all his goods.

Billington executed at Plimouth for murdering one.

Here and there are records of casualties, or discussions of church policy, that, though trivial to us, doubtless furnished the subjects of conversation for many days in the young colony:

Mr. Maverick, one of the ministers of Dorchester, in drying a little powder, (which took fire by the heat of the fire pan) fired a small barrel of two or three pounds, yet did no other harm but singed his clothes. It was in the new meeting-house, which was thatched, and the thatch only blacked a little.

After much deliberation and serious advice, the Lord directed the teacher, Mr. Cotton, to make it clear by the scripture, that the minister's maintenance, as well as all other charges of the church, should be defrayed out of a stock, or treasury, which was to be raised out of the weekly contribution; which accordingly was agreed upon.

Interspersed with such passages as these are, of course, references to graver matters. The question of the red cross in the banner of England, and the treason implied in its removal by Endicott (made familiar to most readers by Hawthorne's story), is the subject of many entries. Here, too, as in Bradford's history, are special providences:

A remarkable providence appeared in a case, which was tried at the last court of assistants. Divers neighbors of Lynn, by agreement, kept their cattle by turns. It fell out to the turn of one Gillow to keep them, and, as he was driving them forth, another of these neighbors went along with him, and kept him so earnestly in talk, that his cattle strayed and gate in the corn. Then this other neighbor left him, and would not help him recover his cattle, but went and told another how he had kept Gillow in talk, that he might lose his cattle, etc. The cattle, getting into the Indian corn, eat so much ere they could be gotten out, that two of them fell sick of it, and one of them died presently; and these two cows were that neighbor's, who had kept Gillow in talk, etc.



It is noticeable, and perhaps significant, that while these observed cases of divine interference are most frequently mentioned in the first part of Bradford's history, they are more common in the later part of Winthrop's. With this tendency to observe remarkable providences came also a credulity regarding supernatural sights and sounds that could be ascribed only to an evil power. Can it be said that as the Pilgrim, after his hardships in England and Holland, gained the beginnings of material prosperity, he noticed fewer dispensations of Providence; while the Puritan, coming from a more comfortable and conventional position in life, felt himself increasingly awed by the mystery of a new land?

Thomas Morton (?-1646) differed greatly from Bradford and Winthrop, both as a man and as an author. The exact facts regarding his life are somewhat in doubt, for his own story and that of the Puritans do not agree, and probably neither is entirely trustworthy. It is known, however, that he was a Cavalier and a member of the Church of England, who in the early years of the Plymouth settlement held a plantation and trading post at Mount Wollaston, or Merry Mount. Here, with a few companions of the same sort, he traded with the Indians, and enjoyed life according to his disposition. His presence was not pleasing to the Pilgrims, who found that he interfered with their trade in beaver, and who were especially troubled because his way of life was not theirs. As good Governor Bradford complains:

They allso set up a May-pole, drinking and dancing aboute it many days together, inviting the Indean women, for their consorts, dancing and frisking together, (like so many fairies, or furies rather,) and worse practises. As if they had anew revived & celebrated the feasts of the Roman Goddes Flora, or the beasly practises of the madd Bacchanalians. Morton likewise (to shew his poetrie) composed sundry rimes & verses, some tending to lasciviousnes, and others to the detraction & scandall of some persons, which he affixed to this idle or idoll May-polle. They chainged allso the name of

their place, and in stead of calling it Mounte Wollaston, they call it Merie-mounte, as if this joylity would have lasted ever.

Nothing was to be merry in the jurisdiction of Governor Bradford, and it was probably his mirth fully as much as other offenses that called down condemnation on Morton. It was charged that he sold arms to the Indians, a serious offense, though by no means uncommon. The "lascivious" verses affixed to the May-Pole are extant, and though they are poor poetry and rather foolish, they contain nothing that need offend the veriest prude. Offenses with the Indian women, hinted rather than charged, are not to be excused according to the rules of strict morality, though they were treated as a matter of course by the settlers in many parts of the country. To the Pilgrims, however, Morton's sins had no palliation; and they seized him and twice transported him to England, whence he returned to be still more harshly treated. He was never brought to trial, and indeed it is doubtful if he was guilty of any serious offense punishable under English law. While in England he allied himself with those persons who were working to secure a revocation of the charter of Massachusetts, and his book,

**New English  
Canaan**

the *New English Canaan*, was evidently intended to aid this party. This was probably written about 1634 or 1635, and was published at Amsterdam in 1637. It extols the country in extravagant terms, praises the Indians, and condemns the Puritans, and endeavours to show that the latter, by their intolerant exclusion of all other settlers, prevent the development of a rich and prosperous English colony.

Morton was a careless, hap-hazard writer, and to his own inaccuracies were probably added those of the foreign printer. His descriptions tend toward extravagance in a way that suggests his connection with the Elizabethan writers and the Cavaliers, rather than with the Puritans:

And when I had more seriously considered of the bewty of the place, with all her faire indowments, I did not thinke that in all the knowne world it could be paralel'd, for so many goodly groves of trees, dainty fine round rising hillucks, delicate faire large plaines, sweete cristall fountaines, and cleare running streames that twine in fine meanders through the meads, making so sweete a murmuring noise to heare as would even lull the sences with delight a sleepe, so pleasantly doe they glide upon the pebble stones, jetting most jocundly where they doe meete and hand in hand runne downe to Neptunes Court, to pay the yearely tribute which they owe to him as soveraigne Lord of all the springs.

The most interesting part of the *New English Canaan* is the third section, which treats of the settlers "together with their Tenents and practise of their Church." A vein of facetiousness runs through this which makes it amusing, even when it is manifestly unfair. Here is to be found the story, afterward used by Butler in "Hudibras," of the proposition to hang an old and bedridden man in place of a young hunter who had committed a theft, because the real culprit could not be spared. The author is fond of contemptuous nicknames, and never fails to refer to Miles Standish as "Captain Shrimp." He is master of a clever though superficial wit, which he employs time after time at the expense of his persecutors, as when he says:

And lastly they differ from us in the manner of praying; for they winke<sup>1</sup> when they pray, because they think themselves so perfect in the highe way to heaven, that they can find it blindfold: so doe not I.

From all that can be learned and conjectured Morton was an irresponsible, roistering sort of fellow, who took everything, even his troubles with the colonists, as a huge joke. No doubt Plymouth was well off without him, but it is hard not to give him some sympathy, and impossible not to be amused by his book. His presence in New England suggests the interesting if profitless inquiry what American history

**Morton's  
Character**

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<sup>1</sup> Winke—close the eyes. Morton of course read his prayerbook when he prayed.

would have been if the Englishman of his type, rather than the Puritan, had dominated the Northern colonies. This thought and the picturesqueness of Merry Mount seen against the sombre Puritan background have attracted the attention of more than one romancer. Hawthorne's story "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" is well known; John Lothrop Motley's *Merry Mount* is a more serious though less successful attempt to use the same material. Altogether, the student of colonial literature is likely to spend more time on the *New English Canaan* than its merits warrant, and to conclude as Governor Bradford concluded his account of Morton and Merry Mount: "But I have been too long about so unworthy a person and bad a cause."

In a community where every one could read and write it was to be expected that many persons of all conditions would leave behind them formal histories or the materials for history. It is hard to choose the most important, but one or two may be mentioned as typical of various classes.

Captain John Mason (1600?-1672), the hero of the conflict between the whites and the Indians in 1637, was requested by the General Court of Connecticut to write an account of his campaign, and did so in a work afterward published as *A Brief History of the Pequot War*. Captain Mason was an Englishman trained to war in the Low Countries, and a good specimen of the devout and unrelenting fighter. His narrative has something of a soldier's bluntness, and shows delight in the outcome of the conflict both as a soldier's work well performed and as an evidence of the Providence of God.

In 1654 there was issued in London a work entitled *A History of New England from the English planting in the Yeere 1628 untill the Yeere 1652*, but since known by the running title of *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England*. This pic-

**John Mason**

**Edward Johnson**

turesque history was the work of Edward Johnson (1599-1672), a native of Kent and an early emigrant to Woburn, Massachusetts; and it is one of the best examples of the kind of writing produced by a devout but wholly uncultured Puritan layman. Johnson's object was to correct false reports about the country, and to show that the development of New England had been under the direct and immediate guidance of Providence. He gives a painstaking statement of many occurrences, but his work is chiefly valuable not as history but as an exemplification of the ideals and modes of thought that were widely diffused in the land. Perhaps the most noticeable characteristic of his style is a tendency to hit upon striking phrases, odd metaphors and hyperboles, often suggesting if not borrowed from the language of Scripture and current religious discourse. Expressions like the following abound:

With these words they lift up their voyces and wept, adding many drops of salt liquor to the ebbing Ocean.

The daylight being clouded with a gross vapor, as if nights Curtaines remained half shut.

So they came over this boysterous billow-boyling Ocean, a few poor scattered stones newly raked out of the heaps of rubbish.

These turns of phrase and figure seem most of them to come spontaneously, but sometimes there are evidences of a mighty effort to find a comparison. Dorchester is thus described:

The forme of this Town is almost like a serpent turning her head to the Northward: over against Tompsons Island, and the Castle, her body and wings being chiefly built on, are filled somewhat thick of Houses, onely that one of her wings is clipt, her Tayle being of such a large extent that she can hardly draw it after her.

Among the less important historians was Nathaniel Morton (1613-1685), the nephew of Governor Bradford, to whom the manuscript history of Plymouth descended. His *New England's Memoriall*, an account of the early years of the



colony, published in 1669, was long regarded as one of the most valuable authorities for American history. Since the discovery of Bradford's manuscript in 1855 it has been found that the most important parts of Morton's work are copied literally, page after page, from his uncle's account. As Morton had access to other manuscripts now lost, which he probably used in the same way, it is hard to say what part of the *Memoriall* is really his own. It is not easy to draw the line between historians and authors who only furnish the materials for history. Closely connected with the true historians were a number of men who made almost equally valuable contributions to our knowledge of early New England, but who wrote for an immediate end. The Reverend Francis Higgeson (1587-1630), or, as the name was later spelled, Higginson, came from England to the church at Salem in 1629. Like many other passengers on sea-going vessels at that time, he kept a journal of his voyage, which he sent back to England, where it was immediately published. He was a born observer, and later in the same year he wrote and sent to London for publication *New Englands Plantation, or a Short and True Description of the Commodities and Discommodities of that Countrey*. This is a brief, well planned, and on the whole well written description of the country, a little pedantic in style, as became the writing of a Cambridge-educated divine. Another early description of America is *New Englands Prospect*, by William Wood. The author probably came to America in 1629, and returned in 1633. Whether he ever came back is uncertain, and it may be that his book was written in England. It is more complete and systematic than most works of its kind, treating of the country, its climate, beasts, birds, fishes, inhabitants, and also "Of the evils and such things as are hurtfull in the Plantation." A peculiarity of the author's style is his ex-



cessive use of adjectives, sometimes as many as twelve or fifteen to one substantive. Perhaps the best descriptions of the aborigines in New England were written by Daniel Gookin (1612-1687), who long held the office of superintendent of the Indians in the colony of Massachusetts. His main concern for the Indians was the salvation of their souls, and he wrote with the purpose of showing their capabilities and the need of missionary work among them. His *Historical Collections of the Indians in New England* was dedicated to Charles II in 1674, but for some reason remained unpublished. He also completed a history of New England on a large scale, but the manuscript is supposed to have been destroyed by fire. John Josselyn, who twice visited America, and who spent, in all, some ten years in the colonies, is the author of two picturesque works: *New England's Rarities Discovered, in Birds, Beasts, Fishes, Serpents, and Plants of that Country, &c.*, published in 1672, and *An Account of two Voyages to New England, &c.*, 1674. Josselyn was a man of family and education, and not much in sympathy with the Puritan strictness of New England. He was chiefly interested in natural science, if the word science can be used in connection with his method; for he records in the most credulous fashion not only what he observes or thinks he observes, but everything that he is told. His writings have the attractiveness that belongs to a combination of a child's book of wonders and a summary of quaint and forgotten theories.

By far the most significant writings produced in early New England were those which dealt with religion and theology.

#### Religious Writings

Few of these deserve the strict title of literature; still fewer are fairly readable to-day.

Their value comes from their intimate connection with the life of the people—from the fact that on the one hand they were the chief influence in moulding liter-

ary taste, and that, on the other hand, they show the literary demands made by the public.

These writings were the work of the Puritan clergy, and in order to understand them it is necessary to know something of their authors. The most notable characteristic of the ministers of the New England churches was the high degree of culture—or more accurately of learning—that they represented. As a rule they were Cambridge men who had made their University studies, like everything else in their lives, a matter of conscientious duty. The field that they covered was not large, but they knew with the utmost thoroughness Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and the intricate mazes of church doctrine. Nor were these subjects for the private study alone. Rarely was a sermon printed without a motto in one of the learned tongues. The accuracy of translations of the Scriptures was often discussed in the pulpit. Quotations from Greek, Latin, and Hebrew were common in sermons, and even in prayers; and almost every pulpit discourse, even those intended for unlearned hearers, dealt with questions of doctrine that would to-day be considered too abstruse for the most intellectual congregation. This does not mean that our ancestors were prodigies; but such powers of mind as they had they were trained from childhood to exercise upon questions of theology. Besides, the sermon was not a matter for the hour only. It was the theme of conversation and of private meditation throughout the week; and that defects of memory might not interfere with a full mastery of its intricacies, auditors were accustomed to bring to the meetinghouse pencil and paper and take notes.

The published writings of the early ministers were largely sermons, either singly or in series that formed virtual systems of church doctrine, or manuals of church practice. They also issued tracts and pamphlets on various subjects.

### **The New England Ministers**

For the minister was not only a spiritual teacher, but a leader and an almost infallible guide in public affairs, the interpreter of God's will to a people with whom the wishes of Providence were supposed to control every act of life. They were consulted at every step by legislators, governors, and judges. These men are most of them remembered as powerful influences in the colony, not as authors of any particular works of importance. It may be well, therefore, to sketch briefly the lives of some of the most prominent of them and afterward to notice some of the more general characteristics of their writings.

The foremost minister of the first half-century in Massachusetts was John Cotton (1585-1652). He was born in Derby, England, and took his degree at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. After making a brilliant record at the University he associated himself with the Puritan party, and became pastor of a church at Boston, England. It was in honor of this church and its illustrious pastor that the chief town of Massachusetts was given its name. When, in 1633, he was driven from England by the persecutions of Archbishop Laud, the leader of the anti-Puritan party, he came to the new Boston, where he was made teacher and later pastor of the famous First Church. His published works include, besides his controversy with Roger Williams, which will be mentioned later, such titles as: *A Brief Exposition upon Ecclesiastes*; *The Grounds and Ends of the Baptism of the Children of the Faithful*; *A Treatise concerning Predestination*; *A Modest and Clear Answer to Mr. Ball's Discourse of Set Forms of Prayer*; and the classic New England catechism, usually known as *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes*. It is not of course by any of these tracts and sermons that his power is to be estimated. It was through his personal force and his pulpit oratory that he became and long remained the real leader of the common-

wealth, determining the policy of the government as well as that of the church.

This sketch of the life of John Cotton might almost serve as the biography of most of his prominent colleagues. Among these was Thomas Hooker (1586-1647). He **Thomas Hooker** was born one year later than Cotton, was also a graduate of Emmanuel College; and was also driven from England by Laud, from whence he went first to Holland, but afterward to America, crossing the ocean in the same ship with Cotton. For three years he preached at Cambridge, and then, with his congregation, founded the town of Hartford, Connecticut. The eighteen titles of his published works include: *The Soul's Preparation for Christ; or a Treatise of Contrition; The Soul's Vocation; or Effectual Calling to Christ; The Saint's Dignity and Duty.*

When Hooker left Cambridge in 1636 his successor in the pulpit was Thomas Shepard (1605-1649), another graduate of Emmanuel, and another victim of Laud. **Thomas Shepard** Among his publications are: *New England's Lamentations for Old England's Errours; Certain Select Cases Resolved; The Clear Sunshine of the Gospel breaking forth upon the Indians in New England.* His writings are somewhat more readable to-day than those of either Cotton or Hooker.

Cotton, Hooker, and Shepard seem at this distance to stand out above their many devout and learned contemporaries, though it would be rash to say with certainty who were really the ablest among the many early New England divines. As has been said, in the history of literature they count more as a class than as individuals. Great as were their differences in temperament, the overwhelming fact of their creed seems to have reduced their methods of expression to a considerable sameness.

The most noticeable characteristic of the writings of these

men is logical exactness. A sermon of those days was not a superficial discussion of a subject, but a thorough investigation of every point involved. Two hours was a usual length for such a discourse, and any important topic was treated in a series of discourses. The parishioner with his notebook was trained to close thinking; and the sermon was arranged in numbered headings and subheadings that suggest a modern college textbook on an abstruse subject.

**New England  
Sermons**

This closeness of analysis is best seen in sermons on doctrinal points; and to appreciate the logical structure it is necessary to study a discourse as a whole. Every American, certainly every American of New England ancestry, should as a filial duty read at least one of these learned theological discussions, to which his forefathers listened week after week. More interesting and more readily quoted, though really less significant, are the hortatory or damnatory sermons occasionally preached to warn the hearers of the wrath to come. The horrors of future punishment offered one of the few subjects on which the Puritan allowed his imagination free play; and it sometimes seems as if he took an exultant pleasure in the vivid picturing of eternal torment. Thomas Shepard thus describes the dialogue between the Judge and a lost soul at the last day:

In regard of the fearful sentence that then shall be passed upon thee; *Depart thou cursed creature into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his Angels.* Thou shalt then cry out. Oh mercy, Lord! Oh a little mercy! No, will the Lord Jesus say, I did indeed once offer it you, but you refused, therefore *Depart.* Then thou shalt plead again, Lord if I must depart, yet blesse me before I go: No, no, *Depart thou cursed.* Oh but, Lord, if I must depart cursed, let me go into some good place: No, depart thou cursed *into hell fire.* Oh Lord, that's a torment I cannot bear; but if it must be so, Lord, let me come out again quickly; No, depart thou cursed into *everlasting fire.* Oh Lord, if this be thy pleasure, that here I must abide, let me have good company with me. No depart thou cursed into ever-



lasting fire *prepared for the Devil and his Angels*. This shall be thy sentence. . . .

The torment which wisdom shall devise, the Almighty power of God shall inflict upon thee, so as there was never such power seen in making the world, as in holding a poor creature under this wrath, that holds up the soul in being with one hand, and beats it with the other, ever burning like fire against a creature, and yet that creature never burnt up, *Rom. 9. 22*. Think not this cruelty, it's justice. . . . Thou canst not endure the torments of a little Kitchen fire on the tip of thy finger, not one half hour together; how wilt thou bear the fury of this infinite, endless, consuming fire in body and soul throughout all eternity? . . .

Thus (I say) thou shalt lie blaspheming, with Gods wrath like a pile of fire on thy soul burning, and floods, nay seas, nay more, seas of tears (for thou shalt forever lie weeping) shall never quench it. And here which way soever thou lookest thou shalt see matter of everlasting grief. Look up to Heaven, and there thou shalt see (Oh) that God is for ever gone. Look about thee, thou shalt see Devils quaking, cursing God; and thousands, nay millions of sinfull, damned creatures crying and roaring out with dolefull shriekings: Oh the day that ever I was born!

Besides sermons and tracts the chief publications of the clergy were controversial writings. Most typical are those regarding some technicality of theology; others were concerned with matters of church discipline, such as methods of baptism, or the right of women to sing psalms at public worship. An interesting example, both from the importance of the question discussed and the prominence of the participants, is that between John Cotton and Roger Williams concerning persecution for religious belief.

This controversy had its origin in England before the emigration of the Puritans to America. An unknown prisoner, confined in Newgate because of his religion, composed some arguments against persecution and sent them to a friend outside the prison, employing the device familiar to every child of using milk as a sympathetic ink. These arguments were published; and a part of them were sent to John Cotton with a

#### Controversial Writings

John Cotton vs.  
Roger Williams



request for his opinion upon them. In reply Cotton wrote a letter, which was printed just at the time that Williams visited England for the purpose of obtaining a charter for Rhode Island. To this letter Williams wrote a hasty reply, published under the title *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for cause of Conscience, discussed in a Conference between Truth and Peace*. When this reached America Cotton wrote a rejoinder entitled *The Bloody Tenent washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb*; and this in turn called forth from Williams *The Bloody Tenent yet More Bloody: by Mr. Cotton's endeavour to wash it white in the Blood of the Lambe*.

The modern reader of this discussion is struck by the fact that so much of it is made up of direct appeals to Scripture, and especially to the symbolical parts of Scripture. The prisoner in Newgate gives as his first argument against persecution, not the inhumanity and injustice of such treatment, but:

Because Christ commandeth that the Tares and Wheat (which some understand are those that walke in the Truth and those that walke in Lies) should be let alone in the World, and not plucked up untill the Harvest, which is the end of the World, Math. 13. 36. 38. &c.

This is followed by other similar scriptural arguments; and it is largely to these that Cotton devotes himself in his reply. Thus, to the passage quoted, he says:

Tares are not Bryars and Thornes, but partly Hypocrites, like unto the godly, but indeed carnall (as the Tares are like to Wheat but are not Wheat,) or partly such corrupt doctrines or practices as are indeed unsound, but yet such as come very near the truth (as Tares do to the Wheat) and so neer that good men may be taken with them, and so the persons in whom they grow cannot bee rooted out, but good Wheat will be rooted out with them.

Arguments of other kinds are of course used by both Cotton and Williams, but they are supported by frequent scriptural citations. The tacit understanding seems to be that the con-

troversy must be settled by appeal not to the spirit but to the letter of the Word of God.

One controversial pamphlet must almost be placed in a class by itself. This is *The Simple Cobler of Aggawamm*, by Nathaniel Ward (1579?-1652?). The author was another of the graduates of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, but instead of passing at once from the University to the ministry, he studied and practiced law, travelled much, and saw the world. Finally he took orders, and soon afterward, like most of his Puritan brethren, suffered the displeasure of Laud. He came to America in 1634, and settled as pastor of the church at Aggawam, afterwards Ipswich. Owing to ill health he resigned his pastorate after three years, but he continued to reside in the colony until 1647, when he returned to England. The *Simple Cobler* was begun in 1645 and was published in London in 1647. On the title-page the author assumes the character of a poor cobbler "willing to help mend his Native Country, lamentably tattered, both in the upper-leather and sole, with all the honest stitches he can take. And as willing never to bee paid for his work, by Old English wonted pay." He makes no attempt, however, to write in the manner of a cobbler. The work may be characterized as a satire on things in general, and a manual of advice to English Puritans, especially to the Parliament. Nathaniel Ward's breadth of experience had not given him breadth of mind, and the first pages of his book are devoted to an intense tirade against religious toleration:

It is said, That Men ought to have Liberty of their Conscience, and that it is persecution to debarre them of it: I can rather stand amazed then reply to this: it is an astonishment to think that the braines of men should be parboyl'd in such impious ignorance; Let all the wits under the Heavens lay their heads together and finde an Assertion worse then this (one excepted) I will petition to be chosen the\_universall Ideot of the world.

This passage represents the style of the author when he is most conventional. When he wishes to be forcible, he uses outlandish words coined by himself, quotations from the Latin, and figures that have the same effectiveness as those of modern slang:

It is a most toylsome taske to run the wild-goose chase after a well-breath'd Opinionist: they delight in vitiligtation: it is an itch that loves alive to be scrub'd: they desire not satisfaction, but satisdiction, whereof themselves must be judges: yet in new eruptions of Error with new objections, silence is sinfull.

The reverend author does not exhaust his vocabulary in attacking religious toleration, but pays his respects to women of fashion in a still more forcible manner. The following is a comparatively mild passage:

It is a more common then convenient saying, that nine Taylors make a man: it were well if nineteene could make a woman to her minde: if Taylors were men indeed, well furnished but with meer morall principles, they would disdain to be led about like Apes, by such mymick Marmosets. It is a most unworthy thing, for men that have bones in them, to spend their lives in making fidle-cases for futulous womens phansies; which are the very pettitoes of Infirmary, the giblets of perquisquilian toys.

The latter part of the work is given over to a discussion of contemporary affairs in England. Here are opinions as outspoken as those on toleration. Of the Irish after the massacres of 1641 he says:

I begge upon my hands and knees, that the Expedition against them may be undertaken while the hearts and hands of our Souldiery are hot, to whom I will be bold to say briefly: Happy is he that shall reward them as they have served us, and Cursed be he that shall do that work of the Lord negligently, Cursed be he that holdeth back his Sword from blood: yea, Cursed be he that maketh not his Sword starke drunk with *Irish* blood, that doth not recompence them double for their hellish treachery to the *English*, that maketh them not heaps upon heaps, and their Country a dwelling place for Dragons, an Astonishment to Nations: Let not that eye look for pity, nor that hand to be spared, that pities or spares them, and let him be accursed, that curseth not them bitterly.

The peculiarities of the *Simple Cobler* are explained partly by the author's personality and partly by the fact that he was writing for English readers. It is an example of that rough-and-ready pamphleteering which was less necessary in the colonies, but which to many lower-class Englishmen of Cromwell's time must have been more effective than the systematic presentation of arguments buttressed with appeals to Scripture. That the work was popular with the classes for whom it was written is shown by the fact that it went through four London editions in less than a year. More recently it has been regarded chiefly as a literary curiosity. The oddities of the author's manner have drawn attention from his matter—and the result has perhaps been fortunate for his reputation. Read for its ideas alone, the work is an exhibition of narrowness and bigotry unusual even in Puritan times.

Contemporary biographies record the learning and the virtues of many other early New England ministers, most of whom published at least a few sermons and tracts that were admired in their day. Few of these men, however, deserve a place in a literary history. Charles Chauncy (1592-1672), a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, came to America in 1638, and settled first at Plymouth and then at Scituate. In 1654 he became president of Harvard college. His publications include two volumes of sermons, and a controversial work entitled *Antisynodalia Americana*. Because of his illustrious descendants rather than of his own work mention should be made of Richard Mather (1596-1669), the father of Increase, the father of Cotton. Unlike most of his Puritan brethren he was educated at Oxford. When he was driven from England by Laud he came to America in 1635 and was for many years pastor at Dorchester. His publications, besides his part in the *Bay Psalm Book*, were mostly sermons.

#### Minor Clerical Writers

There was almost no poetry, in any strict sense of the term, produced by the early New England colonists. Verses, or attempts at verses, were common, and were made by almost every one who wrote at all. Governor Bradford put in rhyme many economic facts regarding New England:

**Early Verses**

Cattle of every kind do fill the land;  
Many are now kill'd, and their hides tann'd:  
By which men are supply'd with meat and shoes,  
Or what they can, though much by wolves they lose.

Other writers composed jingles of the sort current in England during the troubled political times—saws intended to stick in the popular mind, and to express a general truth so as to suggest its application, perhaps in a treasonable way, to current events. Nathaniel Ward furnishes several examples of these couplets in the *Simple Cobler*.

In ending wars 'tween Subjects and their Kings,  
Great things are sav'd by losing little things.

The body beares the head, the head the Crown,  
If both beare not alike, then one will down.

Verses were also used for no other apparent purpose than to relieve the monotony of prose. William Wood, in his *New England's Prospect*, often puts catalogues of plants, trees, animals, etc., in verse:

The Turkey-Pheasant, Heathcocke, Partridge rare,  
The carrion-tearing Crow, and hurtful Stare,  
The long liv'd Raven, th' ominous Screech-Owle  
Who tells, as old wives say, disasters foule.

The most common use of verses was, however, as memorial tributes. At the death of any minister or public man his friends felt called upon to express their grief in rhymed lines. These show perhaps better than anything else the esthetic barrenness of the times. They abound in puns, quibbles, and conceits. Some of them show, as well as commemorate, great learning;

**Memorial  
Verses**

but not one of them impresses a reader to-day as the heart-felt expression of a true emotion. A very few examples of this kind of literature must suffice. On the death of Thomas Hooker, Peter Bulkley wrote:

Let Hartford sigh, and say, I've lost a treasure;  
 Let all New England mourn at God's displeasure,  
 In taking from us one more gracious,  
 Than is the gold of Ophir precious,  
 Sweet was the savour which his grace did give,  
 It season'd all the place where he did live.  
 His name did as an ointment give it smell,  
 And all bear witness that it savoured well.

The death of John Cotton called forth many effusions, one of the best of which was by John Norton:

And after Winthrop's Hooker's, Shepard's hearse,  
 Doth Cotton's death call for a mourning verse?  
 Thy will be done. Yet lord, who dealest thus,  
 Make this great death expedient for us.

That comets, great men's deaths do oft forego,  
 This present comet doth too sadly show.  
 This prophet dead, yet must in's doctrine speak,  
 This comet saith, else must New England break.  
 Whate'er it be, the heavens avert it far,  
 That meteors should succeed our greatest star.  
 In Boston's orb, Winthrop and Cotton were;  
 These lights extinct, dark is our hemisphere.

Morton's *Memoriall*, the great storehouse of these eulogies, preserves this gem:

The ninth of May, about nine of the clock,  
 A precious one God out of Plimouth took;  
 Governor Bradford then expired his breath,  
 Was call'd away by force of cruel death.

The following, on the death of the Reverend Mr. Norton and the Reverend Mr. Stone, is more ingenious:

Last spring this summer may be autumn styl'd,  
 Sad withering fall our beauties which despoil'd;  
 Two choicest plants, our Norton and our Stone,  
 Your justs threw down; remov'd, away are gone.



One year brought Stone and Norton to their mother,  
In one year April, July did them smother.

A stone more than the Ebenezer fam'd;  
Stone splendent diamond, right orient nam'd;  
A cordial stone, that often cheered hearts  
With pleasant wit, with Gospel rich imparts;  
Whetstone that edgified th' obtusest mind;  
Loadstone, that drew the iron heart unkind.  
A pond'rous stone, that would the bottom sound  
Of scripture depths, and bring out Arcan's found.

The same limitations that are seen in these elegiac verses are even more noticeable in the *Bay Psalm Book*. This rendition of the Psalms into so-called metre was made by a committee of the leading ministers of New England, chief among whom were Richard Mather, Thomas Welde, and John Eliot. It was published at Cambridge in 1640, and was the first book printed in America. The task was undertaken because of the feeling that Sternhold and Hopkins's version of the Psalms, which was in use among the Puritans in England, was not sufficiently literal. The translators endeavored to secure a rendering that could be sung, and yet that should adhere as closely as possible to the letter of the original. A glance at their work gives another reminder that it was the Scripture as Scripture, and not the spirit underlying it, that the Puritan valued. These men had no conception of poetry, and no skill in versification; but being without sense of humor they put forth their work with the feeling that they had done a service acceptable to the Lord. Properly to appreciate their readings, one must make comparison with the sonorous King James version, which they had before them. The first lines of Psalm XIX are rendered thus:

The heavens doe declare  
the majesty of God:  
also the firmament shews forth  
his handy-work abroad.

- 2 Day speaks to day, knowledge  
night hath to night declar'd.  
3 There neither speech nor language is,  
where their voyce is not heard.  
4 Through all the earth their line  
is gone forth & unto  
the utmost end of all the world,  
their speeches reach also.

The first American writer who unquestionably deserves the title of poet was Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672). She was born in England in 1612, the daughter of **Anne Bradstreet** Thomas Dudley, afterward governor of Massachusetts—a thrifty old Puritan whose virtues were commemorated in an epitaph by Governor Belcher:

Here lies Thomas Dudley, that trusty old stud,  
A bargain's a bargain, and must be made good.

At the age of sixteen she was married to Simon Bradstreet, who also became a governor of Massachusetts. In 1630, with father and husband, she came to New England. Here she removed from place to place, settling finally at Ipswich; attended to all the duties of a pioneer household; became the mother of eight children; suffered much from ill-health; and, in addition to all this, wrote the works that entitle her to be placed first in the chronicle of American poets.

Her favorite authors were the French Puritan Du Bartas; Quarles; and more strangely, Sir Philip Sidney, whose kinswoman she may have been. It was mainly by men of the stamp of Du Bartas and Quarles, however, that she was influenced. Her longest poems are didactic treatises on "The Four Elements," "The Four Humours in Man's Constitution," "The Four Ages of Man," "The Four Seasons of the Year," and "The Four Monarchies." These and some shorter pieces were first published in London in 1650 under the title *The Tenth Muse lately sprung up in America*—an ambitious designation for which she was in no way responsible. The

manuscripts had been taken without her knowledge or consent by her brother-in-law, the Reverend John Woodbridge, when he sailed for England in 1647, and he procured their publication. Later in life she wrote a few short poems, and a series of "Meditations" in prose which are really superior to her poetical work.

Mrs. Bradstreet's didactic poems are what might be expected from her training. The following, from "The Four Ages of Man," is neither better nor worse than the average, and is interesting as one of two or three passages which have caused some critics to believe that she had read Shakespeare. Youth speaks:

If any care I take 'tis to be fine,  
 For sure my suit, more than my virtues shine.  
 If time from leud Companions I can spare  
 'Tis spent to curle, and pounce my new-bought hair.  
 Some new Adonis I do strive to be:  
 Sardanapalus now survives in me.  
 Cards, Dice, and Oathes concomitant I love,  
 To playes, to masques, to Taverns still I move.  
 And in a word, if what I am you'd hear,  
 Seek out a Brittish, bruitish Cavaleer.

The prologue to the poems runs rather more smoothly:

To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,  
 Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,  
 For my mean pen are too superiour things:  
 Or how they all, or each their dates have run  
 Let Poets and Historians set these forth,  
 My obscure Lines shall not so dim their worth.

Probably the best of her later poems is "Contemplations," which, though uneven, shows in places genuine emotion, and some appreciation of Nature. One stanza may serve as an illustration:

Then on a stately Oak I cast mine Eye,  
 Whose ruffling top the Clouds seem'd to aspire;  
 How long since thou wast in thine Infancy?  
 Thy strength, and stature, more thy years admire,

Hath hundred winters past since thou wast born?  
 Or thousand since thou brakest thy shell of horn?  
 If so, all these as nought Eternity doth scorn.

All circumstances considered, it is surprising that this busy New England matron should have written so much and so well. But, after all, perhaps she best deserves memory because among her lineal descendants were William Ellery Channing, Richard Henry Dana, Wendell Phillips, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

To his contemporaries the Reverend Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705) seemed a greater poet than Anne Bradstreet;

**Michael** for he was the one man who attempted to give  
**Wigglesworth** poetic expression to the prevailing creed and all that it implied. His biography resembles that of many other New England ministers. He was born in England and came to America in 1638, where he endured some hardships on account of the poverty of his family, but was able to graduate from Harvard in 1651. He served in Harvard college for a time as tutor, but about 1655 was settled at Malden, Massachusetts. Here he remained as teacher and pastor until his death, except for a short time when he went on a voyage to the Bermudas for his health. His early intention was to become a physician, and he progressed so far in his medical studies that he was able to minister to the bodies as well as the souls of his congregation. His familiarity with medical phraseology is shown in some of his poems. His own health was poor, and often he was unable to enter the pulpit. At these times he composed some of his verses as the only service he could offer to the Lord.

Among Wigglesworth's lesser poems are "Meat out of the Eater, or Meditations concerning the Necessity, End, and Usefulness of Affliction to God's Children"; and "God's Controversy with New England, written in the Time of the Great Drought." His most important production is, however, *The*

*Day of Doom, or a Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment*, published in 1662. This contains more than two

**The Day  
of Doom**

hundred eight-line stanzas, each resembling a double ballad stanza, modified by the use of internal rhymes and of occasional feminine endings. The peculiar jiggling movement of this verse is strangely out of harmony with the gravity of the theme. After an invocation to Christ the poet begins with the description of the night before the judgment. Then follow the appearance of Christ, the awakening of the living and the dead with the natural consternation of the wicked, the assembly at the judgment seat, and the parting of the multitude upon the right and the left hand. Then the righteous are awarded a place beside the Judge, and the wicked are given an opportunity to speak for themselves. The heathen who never heard the Word, the infants who died at birth, and others who can offer less plausible excuses, endeavour to show why they should not be condemned, and each in turn is answered by the Judge. This part of the poem gives an opportunity for an exposition of Calvinistic theology, and especially for an answer to some of the objections commonly brought against it. In the end, judgment is pronounced, and the poem closes with brief descriptions of the torture of the wicked and the bliss of the righteous.

One of the best known parts of the poem is the plea of the infants who are denied salvation because they died before they could receive baptism. Is answer to their argument that they should not suffer eternal torture for Adam's sin, Christ says:

Would you have griev'd to have receiv'd  
through Adam so much good,  
As had been your for evermore,  
if he at first had stood?  
Would you have said, "We ne'er obey'd  
nor did thy laws regard;  
It ill befits with benefits,  
us, Lord, to so reward?"

Since then to share in his welfare,  
you could have been content,  
You may with reason share in his treason,  
and in the punishment.

and concludes :

You sinners are, and such a share  
as sinners, may expect ;  
Such you shall have, for I do save  
none but mine own Elect.  
Yet to compare your sin with their  
who liv'd a longer time,  
I do confess yours is much less,  
though every sin's a crime.

A crime it is, therefore in bliss  
You may not hope to dwell ;  
But unto you I shall allow  
the easiest room in Hell.

The last couplet quoted, perhaps the best known passage in the *Day of Doom*, is the one expression of the author's better self against the logic of his creed. Every other assertion is supported by marginal citations of Scripture ; the concession to the infants rests only on the poet's sense of justice. It is an interesting result of the conflict which men came more and more to feel between their humane impulses and the inevitable logic of their theology.

The most remarkable fact regarding the *Day of Doom* was its popularity. Professor Tyler estimates that within a year after its publication a copy had been sold for every thirty-five persons, men, women, and children, in New England. When the average size of families at this time is considered, it will be seen that a large proportion of the households in New England were provided with the volume. Its popularity continued well into, and indeed through, the eighteenth century. Children were required to learn it along with their catechism, and the aged repeated it as a comfort when their faith was assailed. Thousands, no doubt, read



no other poetry. Not only was it an index of the state of poetic taste when it was written, but it helped in fixing poetic standards for several generations afterward.

An early versifier whose name should not be wholly forgotten was William Morrell. He was an Episcopalian clergy-

**Minor Verse  
Writer**

man who was sent to New England in 1623 with a commission from the ecclesiastical court, but who found it wise to make no show of authority. His stay of a year or two resulted in a poem, *Nova Anglia*, which, as was not unusual at that time, he wrote in Latin and translated into English. The Latin version is said by those who are judges of such attempts to have some academic merits. The English verses move rather haltingly. There are a few good lines in the introduction, but the body of the poem is only a crude catalogue of plants, animals, and products of commercial value.

The list of authors already given includes the most important of those who wrote in New England during the first

**General Char-  
acteristics of  
Early Period**

half-century of colonial life. It will be noticed that all of them were born in England, and most of them were educated there. Before passing to the first generation of native authors it may be well to summarize the general characteristics of the work of these older men. In this way we shall get more clearly in mind the literary forces and tendencies that the Puritan brought from England, and so shall be better able to trace the course of later literary development.

It is perhaps easier to state what is wanting than what is present in these writings. Both the forms and the qualities

**What Was  
Wanting**

of composition that are most readily associated with the word literature are absent. There was no drama, no fiction, no polite essays, and practically no poetry. There was no expression of love of nature, no romantic feeling, almost no lighter im-

agination. The drama and such fiction as was known at that time were condemned as frivolous or worse. Poetry might possibly have been expected, but the reasons why it was not written are not far to seek. All the higher literary activities of the Puritan were centered on the thought of the life hereafter, rather than on this life. It is impossible to understand the writings or the actions of our forefathers without thoroughly grasping this fact. The church to-day repeats the same statement of belief in the life everlasting; but the church of to-day has discovered that it has duties close at hand and leaves the future pretty largely to itself. It is among less intellectual Christians that we now look for persons who really spend much time in thinking of their state in the New Jerusalem. It was the most intellectual among the Puritans who thought most of this life as a mere preparation for the life beyond. True, the successful way in which they managed their concerns here shows that they must have given considerable time to the affairs of this world; but when they wrote it was on higher things. In those days the newspaper had not given to reading the familiarity that breeds contempt, and the printed or even the written page was considered worthy of preserving only edifying thoughts.

This concentration of thought along one line crowded all lesser matters from the mind of the Puritan. He felt no love for nature as the poets feel it. There was little place in his heart for the love of woman. Love as a sensuous or even a romantic passion was not to be mentioned. There must be no sonnets to Stella or songs to Lucasta. More to his shame, he did not see, or at any rate did not express, the beauty of love within the home. Brutal as the statement seems, the wives of the early settlers were worn to their deaths by the labors of the household and the bearing and rearing of many children; and the bereaved husband rarely found it convenient or economical to depend long on a hired

housekeeper. Most prominent men were married at least twice. Third and fourth marriages were far more common than second marriages are to-day. Never in civilized times has the theory been more consistently held that

God made the woman for the use of man,  
And for the good and increase of the world.

It was long after this that good Samuel Sewall, himself the husband of three women and the unsuccessful suitor of several more, wrote his tract in support of the theory that the weaker sex really have souls. When woman is neither honored as a helpmeet nor worshipped as a mistress she is likely to inspire little poetry.

The one subject for poetry that remained to the Puritan was the relation of God and man—a noble theme, but one on which men should write poems of Miltonic grandeur, or none. New England brought forth a Wigglesworth, not a Milton.

The important writings that were produced in this early period were of two classes—historical and theological. The significant characteristics of these were two—  
**What Was Present** first, common to them all, an intense moral earnestness; second, as almost the only manifestation of the imagination, the use of a powerful and grotesque imagery—seen in the fondness for quotations from Revelation and the Prophets, and in the quaintly wrought phrases of Edward Johnson and others. The persistence of these two peculiarities and the introduction of some characteristics wanting in the early work will be seen in the literature of the later period.

### III. THE NEW ENGLAND COLONIES. SECOND PERIOD, 1676-1765

The first period of New England literature, in which writers were mostly born and educated in England, lasted

for about a half-century. The year 1676 is taken to mark its close, though any date between 1670 and 1680 would serve almost as well. The second period was nearly

**The Period of Native Writers** a century in duration, and extended to the time when the colonists ceased to be truly colonial in spirit, and began the course of thinking and writing that finally led to independence. During this second period the great majority of writers were born and educated in America. As has been seen, New England was not in close literary touch with the mother country. Such writings as were produced represent contemporary American conditions; and these had been little changed by outside influences since the great influx of immigrants between 1630 and 1640. It is not surprising, therefore, that the literary achievements of the time were not great. Though the amount of writing was large, as was to be expected in a community where education was so generally diffused and opportunities for printing were so numerous, yet the productions of real merit are relatively fewer than in the first half-century. As in the earlier period, historical, theological, and political writings were of the greatest importance; but as the strictness of Puritanism began to relax there were slight attempts at other forms of composition.

The historical writings of the second period were, like those of the first, many of them suggested by current events.

**Historical Writings—Indian Wars** From 1676 until the Revolution was a period of almost unbroken warfare with the Indians, either alone or allied with the French; and the record of these terrible but somewhat monotonous conflicts has been preserved in many contemporary narratives. Few of these works were, however, history in the truest sense. Some were virtually political, others religious, tracts; and some were the personal accounts of participants. None of them was of great literary value, but a few may be named as types.

*A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England, From the first Planting thereof in the year 1607 to the year 1677,* by the Reverend William

**William  
Hubbard**

Hubbard (1621-1704), was written with a political purpose. The author was born in England, but came to America at an early age, and was a member of the first class graduated from Harvard. His history was published in 1677, and was clearly called forth by the outbreak of King Philip's war two years earlier. His object appears to have been not only to gratify seasonable curiosity, but to defend the colonies in their relations to the Indians. As he tells the story, there is always but one side to the controversy; and he frequently pauses to notice charges made by "some persons" that the colonists had been unfair or brutal in their dealings with the natives. The value of this defense was appreciated by men prominent in the government, and the first edition was printed with a formal authorization by Simon Bradstreet, Daniel Dennison, and Joseph Dudley.

Increase Mather took advantage of the excitement over the Indian outbreak to point not a political but a religious moral.

The purpose of his book, which also appeared in 1677, was shown by the title: *Relation of the Troubles which have hapned in New England by Reason of the Indians there, From the year 1614 to the Year 1675. Wherein the frequent Conspiracies of the Indians to Cutt off the English, and the wonderfull providence of God, in disappointing their devices is declared. Together with an historical discorse concerning the prevalency of prayer, Showing that New England's late deliverance from the rage of the heathen is an eminent answer of prayer.* The author's chief thesis was that the recent troubles were a punishment inflicted by Providence on a generation that was becoming lax in religious faith.

**Increase  
Mather's History**

A little later *Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War* was written by Major Benjamin Church (1639-1718), a participant, whose book was published in 1716. The author, who was a native of Plymouth, was one of the few writers of the time who were not ministers or graduates of Harvard. His account, which deals largely with the exploits of "Captain Church," is very readable, though crude. In many ways it suggests the work of Captain John Smith a century earlier.

**Benjamin Church**

Many of the writings called forth by the Indian troubles were not formal histories, but personal accounts of experiences, especially of captivity among the Indians. One of the most famous of these narratives is that of Mary Rowlandson, who in the winter of 1676 was carried off from Lancaster, Massachusetts, where her husband was pastor. Some time after her return she wrote an account of her adventures, which was published in 1682. It is a plain, pointed narrative, showing keen observation, and revealing the personality of the author almost as plainly as the manners of the savages.

**Narratives of Captivity—Mary Rowlandson**

Probably the most notable personal account growing out of the hostilities between 1702 and 1713 is *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion, or A faithful history of Remarkable Occurrences in the Captivity and Deliverance of Mr. John Williams, minister of the gospel of Deerfield, who in the desolation which befel that plantation by a incursion of the French and Indians, was by them carried away, with his family and his neighborhood, into Canada*. The occurrence referred to on this descriptive titlepage took place February 29, 1704. The author of the account was born at Roxbury, Massachusetts, was graduated at Harvard, and except during the year of his

**John Williams**



captivity and a short time thereafter was pastor of the church at Deerfield from 1688 until his death in 1729.

The capture of the inhabitants of Deerfield was one of the most serious and horrible events of the long war. At first the author relates in detail the brutal murders of women and children who, on the march to Canada, became exhausted and a burden to their captors; but after his wife had suffered this fate, and the number of victims increased, he writes more briefly. For example: "On Saturday (March 4) the journey was long and tedious; we travelled with such speed that four women were tired, and then slain by them who led them captive." Through all these hardships the author sees a special providence of God in every escape, and a just affliction of God in every case of murder or torture. When he arrives at Quebec, his chief hostility seems to be directed, not against the Indians for their barbarity, but against the Jesuits, who, though according to his account they were humane, attempted to convert the captives to Romanism.

These narratives of captivity among the Indians had an especial importance in an age when all fiction was forbidden.

**Substitutes for Fiction** Though they were usually written or at least vouched for by ministers, and always avowed religious edification as their purpose, they abounded in thrilling adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and they were the New England boy's only equivalent for the Wild West stories that have charmed recent generations. In some of those of later date, though the truth of the story is always asserted and the moral purpose is always avowed, the facts are evidently colored for effect. In spirit, at least, a connection may be traced between these narratives and the nineteenth century romances in the manner of Cooper.

Besides the many histories and journals growing out of the Indian wars there were also produced a few general historical works. The most famous of these, Cotton Mather's

*Magnalia, or the Ecclesiastical History of New England*, will be noticed in connection with other writings by the same author. Probably the most scholarly piece of

**General Histories—Thomas Prince**

historical work done in New England during the eighteenth century was Thomas Prince's

*Chronological History of New England in*

*the form of Annals*. Thomas Prince (1687-1758) was born at Sandwich, Massachusetts, and was graduated from Harvard in 1707. After two years spent probably in the study of theology he went to England, where he travelled, preached, and made a reputation that reached back to his colonial home. In 1717 he returned to Boston, and a year later became pastor of the Old South Church, which position he held until his death. His attention was early turned to historical studies, and soon after he became pastor he began to collect the famous library which he presented to his church, and which still bears his name. The duties of his pastorate left him little time for outside studies, however, and it was not until 1736 that the first volume of his history was published. This did not meet with the reception that it deserved, and it was not until 1754 and 1755 that three pamphlet parts of Volume II appeared. The last of these ends abruptly in the middle of a sentence describing the events of August 5, 1633. It is probable that several more parts, perhaps all of the second volume, were completed, but public interest in the work did not encourage their publication, and no trace of them remains.

As was usual with early historians, Prince felt it necessary to begin with the creation of the world, and more than half of his first volume is occupied in bringing the chronicle to 1620, when New England history really begins. The preparation of this

**Prince's Historical Method**

early chronology from the confused mass of historical fables that were then believed was a long and troublesome

task for a man with Prince's love of accuracy, and he wasted upon it much time that he might profitably have expended upon the valuable manuscripts and records that he had collected. The real value of that part of the history that treats of New England comes from the exactness and scholarly care with which the author has verified every statement and tried to reconcile every apparent contradiction. In his preface he gives a long list of manuscript authorities to which he had access, many of which are now lost. These he cites continually, not only referring to his authority, but wherever possible giving the exact words of the original. Like most historical works in strictly chronological form, Prince's history is dry and uninteresting to the general reader. To the student of history it is, however, of great value; and it is significant as showing how far the historical sense, first seen in Bradford and Winthrop, developed during the colonial time. When Prince's opportunities are considered he may well be placed in the list with those later New Englanders who have won marked distinction for historical scholarship.

Thomas Hutchinson (1711-1780), the last royal governor of Massachusetts, is best remembered for the part he took in the events leading to the Revolution, but his relations as an historian are rather with the colonial than with the revolutionary epoch. He was born in Boston and was graduated at Harvard, and entered on a business and political career that lasted nearly half a century. He was inclined to the collection of historical documents, as he tells us, by "the repeated destruction of ancient records and papers in the town of Boston." His attention was turned mainly to the history of Massachusetts Bay, though in an appendix to his second volume he gives a summary of events in Plymouth. The first volume of his *History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, which appeared in 1764, covered the period from the first settlement

**Thomas  
Hutchinson**

of the colony until 1691. The second volume, published in 1767, brought the narrative to 1750. Before this volume was given to the press the trouble between Massachusetts and the mother country had assumed a serious form. Hutchinson was inclined, both by temperament and by official position, to be a conservative, and he soon incurred the displeasure of the radical patriots. In August, 1765, his house was raided by a mob, and many of his manuscripts were lost or destroyed. That of the second volume of the *History* was rescued from the streets where it had been thrown.

Hutchinson edited and published in 1769 *A Collection of Original Papers relative to the History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*. In 1774 he went to England, where he died in 1780. In these last years of his life he wrote a third volume of his *History*, which remained in manuscript until 1828. His treatment of the later years of the colonies, though as fair as could be expected, is colored by his views of the great controversies still unsettled at the time of his death. The earlier part, written before the seriousness of the coming struggle was recognized, is scholarly and judicial in tone.

A few lesser historical writers are of some interest to the student of literature. William Hubbard, having made a beginning as an historian in his narrative of the Indian wars, wrote *A General History of New England from the Discovery to 1680*.

**Minor  
Historians**

This extended work, which remained in manuscript until 1815, shows a considerable amount of research, but follows for the earlier years a few other authorities very closely. One of the most interesting chapters is that on "Memorable occurrences and sad accidents that happened in New England from 1666 to 1682"—an account that shows the feeling toward the marvellous that existed a few years before the witchcraft excitement. About the middle of the eighteenth century William Douglass (1691?-1752), a Scottish physi-

cian, settled in Boston, published *A Summary, Historical and Political, of the First Planting, Progressive Improvements, and Present State of the British Settlements in North America*. This discursive work in two volumes was quickly republished in London, and attracted much attention. It begins with "Some general account of ancient and modern colonies," and when it finally reaches America treats of the entire continent from Hudson's Bay as far south as the English had planted settlements. In order to make his work more readable the author introduces digressions on all kinds of subjects from whaling to the small-pox. He is also free in the expression of his own opinions, particularly on matters in any way connected with his profession. His diagnosis of the witchcraft mania is especially interesting, as is the added remark: "The pourings out of the Spirit, which have at times been epidemick in Northampton upon the Connecticut river belong to this tribe of nervous disorders." The book contains lists of salaries, details of public defenses, of manufactures, etc., and other general information for which later historians should be thankful; but it is itself lacking in the system and proportion needful in a true history. Among the many histories of Indian troubles was that of Samuel Penhallow (1665-1726), which covered the wars of 1703-13, and 1722-25. This is characterized by a display of extreme vindictiveness toward the Indians—a spirit the more noticeable because the author in his earlier years began a study of the native languages with the intention of serving as a missionary. Samuel Niles (1674-1762) left an incomplete history of the Indian wars from 1634 to 1760. He was a clergyman, and frequently pauses in his narrative to draw a lesson.

The journals and contemporary records of the second colonial period, though hardly as picturesque as those of the first, are of value to the later historian. The most important



diarist of the time was Samuel Sewall (1652-1730). Both the paternal and the maternal grandfathers of Judge Sewall were early immigrants to Massachusetts, but owing to some considerations of health his parents went to England, where he was born in 1652. When he was about nine years of age the family returned to New England. Samuel Sewall was graduated at Harvard in 1671, and became a resident fellow, and afterward keeper of the college library. He studied divinity and began to preach, but abandoned the ministry for business and politics. For three years he was censor of the printing-press at Boston. In 1692 he became member of the council and judge of the probate court. As such he played a prominent part in the trials for witchcraft at Salem, but later became convinced of his error, and made a public statement of repentance—an act that cost him the friendship of the Mathers and other influential associates who refused to acknowledge that they had made a mistake. Besides the *Diary* he wrote *The Selling of Joseph*, usually spoken of as the first anti-slavery tract in America, and several other pamphlets on religious and political questions.

Judge Sewall's *Diary*, the best authority extant on the details of colonial life and customs during the last of the seventeenth and the first of the eighteenth centuries, was begun in 1673, when the writer was a resident fellow at Harvard, and continued until 1729, one year before his death. In the earlier part we find the news of the day, trivial matters of personal interest, and details of the government of Harvard:

Mar. 23. I had my hair cut by G. Barret.

June 15. Thomas Sargeant was examined by the Corporation: finally, the advice of Mr. Danforth, Mr. Stoughton, Mr. Thatcher, Mr. Mather, (then present) was taken. This was his sentence.

That being convicted of speaking blasphemous words concerning



the H. G. he should be therefore publicly whipped before all the Scholars. 2. That he should be suspended as to taking his degree of Bachelour (this sentence read before him twice at the Prts. before the committee, and in the hall 1 up before execution). 3. Sit alone by himself in the Hall uncovered at meals, during the pleasure of the President and Fellows, and be in all things obedient, doing what exercise was appointed him by the President, or else be finally expelled the Colledge. The first was presently put in execution in the Library (Mr. Danforth, Jr. being present) before the Scholars. He kneeled down and the instrument Goodman Hely attended the President's word as to the performance of his part of the work. Prayer was had before and after by the President.

In later years matters of personal concern occupy a large place, and we read with interest, though with a half-feeling of prying into another's affairs, the record of the courtships which preceded his second and third marriages, and especially of the unsuccessful wooing of Madam Katherine Winthrop. Mixed with the record of such matters are accounts of graver affairs of church and state. Wherever the reader opens the three heavy volumes of the Massachusetts Historical Society Collections that contain this diary he is likely to find something of interest, and to learn something worth knowing regarding the manners of the time or the delightful personality of the author.

A journal written in a much more selfconscious tone than that of Sewall is Mrs. Sarah Kemble Knight's brief account of her trip from Boston to New Haven and New York in 1704. This is a shrewd and minute description of the experiences of a traveller at that time, and lays chief stress on the inconveniences of the road. It was not published until 1825.

**Sarah Kemble  
Knight**

During almost the entire colonial time in New England a great part of the writings of all kinds was produced by the clergy. Though popular education was generally diffused, indeed almost universal, nearly every man who had the benefit of college training entered the ministry. This was owing partly to the

**Importance of  
the Ministers**

religious tone of the commonwealth, partly to the fact that the clergy assumed many of the duties that naturally belong to other professions. They took part, both as advocates and as arbiters, in the settlement of disputes; so that no need was found for the services of lawyers. There is no record of a professional barrister in Massachusetts before 1688, and long after that lawyers were few, and their calling was in rather ill repute. Medicine was generally on an unscientific basis, and many of the more reputable practitioners were clergymen who made the curing of bodies incidental to the saving of souls. Education, beyond the elementary instruction supplied by dame schools, was also in the hands of the ministers. Even down to the nineteenth century it was customary for boys to prepare for college under the instruction of some scholarly clergyman.

It was natural that a body of men who had so nearly a monopoly of the intellectual callings should have almost a monopoly of authorship. The majority of the historians were clergymen. The same will be found true of the writers of verse. Naturally, however, the great bulk of the writings which the members of the clerical profession published had to do with theology or the then closely related subjects of philosophy and statecraft. Works of this kind merit consideration by themselves.

The closing years of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries saw a change in the relation of the ministers to the people that amounted almost to a revolution. For the first two generations in New England the power of the clergy was, as has been seen, practically absolute. The decline of this clerical power was brought about by a number of causes, economic, theological, and political. The material prosperity of the colonists had the effect of turning their minds to this world, rather than to the world to come; there

**The Clerical  
Power  
Threatened**

was some truth in the continued complaints of the clergy that the people were less devout than their forefathers. The theological position of the leading New England churches was attacked from various sides. Early in the eighteenth century there began to be felt a philosophical liberalism that resulted, long after, in the Unitarian schism. The emotional revivals of Whitefield, Edwards, and others about 1740 tended in another way to disturb the sedateness of the older church. More clearly recognized as a danger was the movement to introduce the established church of England—a movement that found favor with the partizans of the royal governors.

The political power of the clergy waned as the relations of the colonists to the mother country became more prominent. With the withdrawal of the charters in 1684-6 the old order of things was broken up; and when in 1691 Increase Mather secured a new charter for Massachusetts it conferred suffrage not for church membership, but on the basis of a property qualification. From this time the churches as churches, and their pastors as their representatives, had less and less to say in matters of government. No one recognized this change more than the ministers themselves. Among the writings of the time none are of more interest than those which represent the fight in favor of the old time prerogatives—a fight which from the very constitution of the colonies was hopeless.

Of all the influential ministers of New England during the last century of the colonial time, the three who stand out most prominently are Increase and Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards.

The Mathers were for nearly fifty years the most conspicuous supporters of the old church party. Increase, the son of Richard Mather, who has been mentioned as one of the editors of the *Bay Psalm Book*, was born at Dorchester, Massachusetts, in 1639, and died in

Boston in 1723. His son Cotton was born in 1663, and died in 1728. So much of the work of father and son was contemporary that it will be convenient to treat of the two together.

Increase Mather entered Harvard college at twelve years of age, but after a year his parents, fearing for his health, removed him and placed him under the tutorship of the Reverend John Norton for something over a year. He took his degree in 1656, at the age of seventeen, presenting as his graduating disputation an attack on the philosophy of Aristotle. About a year later he went abroad, took the Master's degree at Trinity college, Dublin, spent some time in London, and preached in various parts of England and on the island of Guernsey. In 1661, driven out by the act of conformity, he returned to America. At first he preached alternately in his father's church at Dorchester and in the North Church at Boston. In March, 1662, he married his stepsister, the daughter of John Cotton, thus uniting two of the most distinguished clerical families of New England. In February, 1663, his son Cotton was born. The next year he was ordained pastor of the North Church, Boston.

To write his biography for the next half-century would be to recount much of the history of the colony. For more than thirty years he was the leading spirit of Massachusetts in matters political, religious, and educational; and even after the decline of his power, he and his son were leaders and spokesmen for a minority too strong and too active to be ignored. In 1679 he was moderator of the "Reforming Synod" of New England churches, called to consider the evil ways of New England, which, in the opinion of the members, had brought upon the colonies the judgment of God in the shape of Indian wars and threatened

**The Leading  
Spirit of  
Massachusetts**

political calamities. In 1681 he was tendered the presidency of Harvard, but declined. Two years later he opposed submission to the demand of Charles II that the charter be given up. In 1685 he accepted the presidency of Harvard. Early in 1688 he was sent to England with an address to the king. His mission was to secure the restoration of the old charter of Massachusetts; but failing in this before the Revolution, and finding it impossible under William and Mary, he devoted himself to securing a new charter on the most favorable terms possible. This course made Mather some enemies, especially as the officers under the new government were chosen by him. But for a time his party was in the ascendancy, and he was apparently the most powerful political force, as well as the most distinguished clergyman in New England.

Meanwhile Cotton Mather had been graduated from Harvard at the age of fifteen, had begun the study of medicine, abandoned this for the ministry, been called to assist his father, and had married the daughter of Colonel Phillips. From this time on he and his father worked side by side. Signs of revolt against their dominion soon appeared. Later governors paid less and less attention to their counsels; advocates of a more liberal theology established a rival church in Boston, and to their still greater annoyance secured control of Harvard college. Increase Mather, who had been president of the college while living in Boston and serving as pastor of his church, was legislated out of office by the adoption of a resolution that the president must reside at Cambridge. Later the presidency was conferred upon Leverett, the pastor of the Brattle street church, which had been organized in opposition to the Mathers; and on his death the corporation chose in succession three other ministers, passing by Cotton Mather, whose chagrin is frankly expressed in his diary.

**Revolt Against  
the Mathers**



The champion of a losing cause is always unpopular. The unpopularity of the Mathers was greatly intensified by the part which they, or at least the younger, took in the persecutions at Salem for witchcraft.

**The Mathers and  
Witchcraft**

To what extent they were morally culpable for their part in this affair is a matter of dispute. Like most of their contemporaries in England and America they believed in the possibility of witchcraft. They also believed that the loss of religious intensity and the tendency to disregard the leadership of the ministers were signs of appalling degeneration, and deserved divine punishment. The Lord had already sent Indian wars and political troubles without effect; it would not be strange if as a more terrible affliction he allowed the Devil to work for a time unmolested in New England. Probably both men were sincere in the belief that this was the true analysis of the state of affairs, but they may have been the more ready to believe because the existence of this mysterious horror could be used as a telling argument in support of their position. Cotton Mather was especially active in the trials at Salem, and in the revulsion of feeling that followed, no one among the persecutors suffered more in reputation than he. Some years later he incurred the popular hatred for an action which is now approved even by those who dislike him most—his fearless advocacy of inoculation for the smallpox.

In character, Increase Mather seems to have been the saner and more practical of the two. Although he was a born autocrat, and a man of intense likes and dislikes, he was something of a diplomat, who knew how to meet men, and, while he kept control of his temper, how to use them for his purposes. Probably few men in the colony could have done better service in connection with the charter than he did.

**Increase and  
Cotton Mather  
Compared**

In pure intellectual ability Cotton Mather was superior



to his father. He was a wider reader, a more voluminous writer, possibly a more astute theologian. But certain weaknesses of his character, intensified by his training, made him a less admirable, probably a less useful man. His position as the son of the leading New England divine, and his own precocity insured him a degree of admiration not conducive to modesty; and unlike his father he never enjoyed the corrective influence of travel and contact with the great world. He well knew the extent of his intellectual acquirements, and in spite of constant expressions of humility it is impossible not to feel his pride. His temper was vindictive, and not always under control. He lived a life of the strictest Puritan asceticism, from the time when as a child he indulged in secret prayer and composed forms of prayer for his playmates, to his old age when some of his fasts were of three days' duration. His life cannot be understood without bearing in mind his constant fasts and vigils, his habit of introspection, and of seeing moral lessons in the most trivial acts of life. Such a man is not likely to have the broad Christian sympathy which draws others to him. Certainly Cotton Mather did not. In his old age he was forced to endure many disappointments. His aspirations for the presidency of Harvard college were thwarted. Many members of his church deserted him. The very boys of Boston taunted him with ribald songs. Within his own home he saw the death of two of his three wives and thirteen of his fifteen children. His third wife became hopelessly insane. His oldest and dearest son became a wretched profligate. Yet there was something about his personality which prevents even these tragic experiences from arousing the sympathy that they might.

In literary style father and son differed much as they differed in temperament. Increase, while not free from pedantry, usually wrote clearly and to the point. The works of Cotton show the extremes which the fantastic method reached

in New England. His writings abound in pedantic words, odd conceits, far-fetched allusions, and artificially constructed sentences. A fair idea of the difference in style of the two men may be gained by comparing the letters which they wrote to Governor Dudley in 1708. These letters, which express an indignation that got the better of their good sense, might be expected to show the natural style of the authors. The opening of each will serve as an example. The first is from Increase:

**Difference in  
Literary Style**

That I have had a singular respect for you, the Lord knows; but that since your arrival to the government, my charitable expectations have been greatly disappointed, I may not deny. Without any further preface or compliments, I think it my duty freely and faithfully to let you understand what my sad fears concerning you are.

1st. I am afraid you cannot clear yourself from the guilt of bribery and unrighteousness: For you to declare to Mr. Newton, that he should not do what his office as judge in the admiralty obliged him unto, unless he would give you an hundred pounds, was surely a sin of that nature. And for you not to consent that some, whose titles to their land the general Assembly had confirmed, should enjoy their right, except they would give you a sum of money, is unrighteousness.

Cotton Mather wrote as follows:

There have appeared such things in your conduct, that a just concern for the welfare of your Excellency seems to render it necessary, that you should be *faithfully advised* of them. It was not without a design to introduce and exercise this *faithfulness*, that I have in divers letters to your Excellency, *sought out acceptable words*, and acknowledged every thing in the world, that might at all dispose you to give me the hearing. In some of those letters, I have indeed, with the language of the tribe of *Naphtali*, insinuated unto you, what those points were, wherein I earnestly desired that we might observe and confess you *laudable*. And I still imagined that you would at the same time understand my apprehension of there being points, wherein you were too defective.

The amount of literary work put forth by these two men is enormous. Increase Mather is credited with almost one hundred and fifty published works. The list of Cotton

Mather's writings appended to his Life by his son Samuel includes three hundred and eighty-three titles, and this, later scholars tell us, is incomplete.

Probably the most notable work of Increase Mather, from the stand-point of to-day, is his *Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*. This book, published in 1684, is a collection of marvellous stories of divine intervention, some of which were contained in an earlier manuscript sent from England, and some contributed by New England clergymen. Mather was rather the editor than the author. The stories are many of them well enough told to be readable to-day, and they derive some interest from their bearing on the witchcraft delusions of a decade later. The greater number of Increase Mather's publications are of course sermons. Representative titles are "Important Truths about Conversion," "An Arrow against Profane and Promiscuous Dances," "The Revolution Justified" (1690), "The Voice of God in Stormy Winds."

Of Cotton Mather's four hundred works the largest and best known is the *Magnalia Christi Americana, or The Ecclesiastical History of New England*, published in London in 1702. This history covers the period from the earliest times to the close of the seventeenth century, and is divided into seven books. The first treats of the settlement and discovery of the country; the second gives the lives of the governors; the third the lives of sixty famous divines of the colonies; the fourth contains the history of Harvard college; the fifth treats of the "acts and monuments of the faith and order in the churches of New England"; the sixth is a record of illustrious providences; and the seventh, entitled "The Wars of the Lord," tells of the afflictions and disturbances of the churches. This massive work, which Mather

**Increase  
Mather's  
Writings**

**Cotton Mather's  
Writings—the  
Magnalia**

himself considered his most important production, is a mine of not very reliable information for the student of our early history, and an excellent illustration of the way in which that history was viewed by an ultra-orthodox New England clergyman. Both style and plan show the author's pedantry, and his fondness for anything but the natural manner of expression. Notwithstanding its defects, however, the *Magnalia* exerts a sort of fascination on the reader, particularly in the more direct passages, like the accounts of witchcraft and the Life of Sir William Phips.

Another work of Cotton Mather's, the memory of which has been preserved to us by the complimentary notice of

**Cotton Mather's  
Lesser Writings** Franklin in his *Autobiography*, is *Bonifacius, An Essay upon the Good that is to be Devised and Designed*, etc.—commonly known by the

abbreviated title of *Essays to do Good*. This shows the practical, common-sense side of the author's mind. Still another book, the interest in which comes more from subject-matter than from method of treatment, is *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, in which the author gives his opinions upon witchcraft, and recounts with much detail some of the circumstances that led him to believe in the presence of witches in New England.\* Among representative titles of less-known and less important works are: *Balsamum Vulnerarium e Scriptura: or the Cause and Cure of a Wounded Spirit*; *Brontologia Sacra: Sermons occasioned by remarkable Thunder-Storms*; *Pillars of Salt: An History of Criminals executed; with two Lectures on Sin punished with Sin*;

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\* An almost unique work of some interest to the student of history is *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, published in London by Robert Calef, a hardheaded Boston merchant, in 1700. This reply to Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World* contains a jumble of arguments against witchcraft, accounts of the recent manifestations at Salem as seen by an unbeliever, and attacks on the Mathers, especially Cotton. It probably owes part of its fame to the melodramatic fact that it was publicly burned in Harvard college yard by order of President Increase Mather.

*Golgotha: A lively description of Death; with Memorials of an hopeful Young Man.*

After the death of the Mathers the supporters of strict Puritanism in America found their cause steadily weakened both by active opposition and by popular apathy. They were no longer able to punish trivial heresies and offenses against church discipline by the civil law; but they could still preach the certainty and the awfulness of a punishment hereafter. From this time there was an apparent increase in the number of sermons that pictured the tortures of the damned. One result of the striving after a livelier religious faith was a series of revivals known as the "Great Awakening," beginning about 1740. This movement, which was not confined to America, sprang from widely different sources; but it first manifested itself in New England as a consequence of strenuous exertions on the part of those who still believed that without a return to the old spirit the colonies were hopelessly lost. The ultimate result of this revival was a schism in the church; but at first it was welcomed by most of the orthodox as a special manifestation of Providence.

The New Englander whose name is most prominently associated with this revival was Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), a man of the greatest piety, conscientiousness, and delicacy of feeling. A glance at his portrait is enough to show that he was made of finer stuff than most of his contemporaries. To such a mind the thought of eternal tortures, preached as his conscience told him he must preach it to an apathetic world, could only have been repulsive. He tells us that he was repelled by it; and he seems to have become reconciled to the idea only through a course of metaphysical reasoning by which he proved to himself that it was both necessary and just. It was a strange result of the age that the man who had per-

**The Great  
Awakening**

**Jonathan  
Edwards**



haps the finest poetic sensibilities of any writer in colonial New England produced no poetry, but on the one hand the greatest American treatise on metaphysical theology, and on the other hand pictures of eternal torment the most graphic and detailed of the many that were painted during the reign of the old beliefs.

Jonathan Edwards was born in East Windsor, Connecticut. He came of a family which had been in New England since 1640, and his father was a graduate of Harvard, a minister noted for more than usual learning. In 1720 he was graduated at Yale college, which had come to be looked upon as the stronghold of orthodoxy, in opposition to Harvard, which had become hopelessly liberal. After receiving his first degree he remained at Yale for two years in preparation for the ministry, and after preaching to a Presbyterian congregation in New York for eight months, he returned and was tutor for two or three years more. Early in 1727 he was settled as colleague with his grandfather, pastor of the church at Northampton.

Jonathan Edwards is said to have been unusually precocious. As a boy he had an especial liking for natural science. It was in his early years, too, that he showed most plainly the poetic capabilities of his mind, which were afterward kept subordinate to his work as preacher and theologian. When fourteen years old he first read Locke "On the Human Understanding," and some writings of this period show his grasp on metaphysics, even at this early age. Whether he knew Berkeley in the early part of his life is a matter of doubt. If not, he anticipated some of that philosopher's conclusions.

In 1735 occurred the first of the revivals in Edwards's church at Northampton. His account of this, published in 1736 and usually known as *Narratives of Surprising Conversions*, probably had much influence on similar occurrences



elsewhere. About 1740 came the first visit of Whitefield, the great evangelist, to New England, and the "Great Awakening"

**Edwards and  
Religious  
Revivals**

already referred to. The history of this movement cannot be given here. It presents a host of psychological phenomena second only to the Salem witchcraft in peculiar interest, and the questions that it raised regarding the rights of itinerant ministers and the obedience due from congregation to pastor were settled in a way that changed the ecclesiastical history of New England. Edwards was made by temperament and by circumstances a champion of the movement, yet he seems always to have been conservative, and to have discountenanced both the excesses of the meetings and the claims of itinerants who disparaged the regular clergy.

In 1750 Jonathan Edwards was dismissed from his pastorate at Northampton. It is impossible now to explain satis-

**Edwards's Dis-  
missal from His  
Pastorate**

factorily this action, which was then almost without precedent. Six years before he had discovered that some of the young people of his congregation were reading books which tended "to promote lascivious and obscene discourse." We could understand the matter better if we knew whether the books were such as would now be called obscene, or whether, as has been conjectured, they were eighteenth century novels which had found their way to Northampton. At all events the congregation failed to sustain the efforts of the pastor to discipline the offenders. From this time his power over his church declined. The immediate cause of the rupture seems to have been his views on admission to the Lord's Supper, which were much more strict than those of his grandfather. His farewell sermon is an admirable example of his controversial style and of the plain speaking allowed in the pulpit at that day.

After his removal from Northampton Edwards settled at

Stockbridge as missionary to the Indians. Here he wrote his masterpiece, usually cited as the *Treatise on the Freedom of the Will*, in which he attempted to reconcile the conflict between the thought of man as a free moral agent and the thought of God as an omnipotent power. In 1757 he was called to the presidency of Princeton college, a position which he filled but a few weeks. He died of the smallpox in 1758.

In addition to the two works already referred to, Jonathan Edwards published a large number of sermons and a few other treatises. His sermons are mostly long and elaborate, showing the painstaking work of the scholar. The great majority of them

**Edwards's  
Writings**

treat of doctrinal points or matters of church policy. These are admirably planned and written, and are dry only because the subjects are now uninteresting. The discourses that are best remembered are those that present the horrors of eternal punishment. Edwards is said to have had none of the tricks of the dramatic orator; but by the simplicity and force of his literary style, and his dignity and power as a man, he succeeded better than any other minister of his time in bringing his hearers to a realization of the awful doctrine that he preached. An account is preserved of the appalling effect produced at Enfield by his sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"; and this sermon is perhaps the best known of all his published discourses. But many others are in the same strain. Among the titles are: "The Eternity of Hell Torments," "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners," "Wicked men useful in their Destruction only," "The Torments of the Wicked in Hell, no Occasion of Grief to the Saints in Heaven."

Mention has been made of the rapt and poetic tone of some of Edwards's early writings. His description of his future wife is a notable illustration. Less intense, but more typical, is a passage like the following:

I very frequently used to retire into a solitary place, on the banks of Hudson's river, at some distance from the city, for contemplation on divine things and secret converse with God; and had many sweet hours there. Sometimes Mr. Smith and I walked there together, to converse on the things of God; and our conversation used to turn much on the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, and the glorious things that God would accomplish for his church in the latter days. I had then, and at other times, the greatest delight in the holy Scriptures, of any book whatsoever. Oftentimes in reading it, every word seemed to touch my heart. I felt a harmony between something in my heart and those sweet and powerful words.

The same intensity of imagination, turned in another direction, is seen in a passage like the following from the sermon on "The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable":

We can conceive but little of the matter; we cannot conceive what that sinking of the soul in such a case is. But to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, all of a glowing heat, or into the midst of a glowing brick-kiln, or of a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, as full within and without as a bright coal of fire, all the while full of quick sense; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace! And how long would that quarter of an hour seem to you! If it were to be measured by a glass, how long would the glass seem to be running! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had it to endure the other fourteen!

But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years! O then, how would your heart sink, if you thought, if you knew, that you must bear it forever and ever! That there would be no end! That after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, than ever it was; and that you never, never should be delivered.

But your torment in hell will be immensely greater than this illustration represents.

In conclusion, it may be said that everything that Jonathan Edwards wrote was characterized by care and order in

arrangement, purity and simplicity in diction. There is often a charm about his prose that attracts the reader, even when he presents a dry or repellent subject. His **Edwards's Style** great work on *The Freedom of the Will* is a classic of metaphysics, not of literature; yet most of those who have tried to overthrow the argument have paid tribute to the logical care of the method and the charm of the style.

The clergy of New England were as a body such scholarly men, the part they played in affairs was so great, that even those who lived with them found it difficult to measure their relative importance. So to-day it is hard to decide who should be ranked next after Edwards and the Mathers. The few who will be mentioned here are among those who were most noted and whose fame seems to rest on the most enduring basis. **Minor Preachers and Theologians** Urian Oakes (1631?-1681) was a famous preacher of the last half of the seventeenth century. When only a youth he published a series of astronomical calculations. Later in life he was considered a remarkable Latin scholar and an effective preacher of the old conservative school. His published works in prose are a few sermons that would hardly give him fame to-day. An elegy on Thomas Shepard has been mentioned elsewhere. John Wise (1652-1725) was among the first of the ministers who stood for the new democratic order of things. He was born at Roxbury, where his father had come as an indentured servant. In those days social position was everywhere taken into account; even at Harvard college students were listed in the catalogue and took their seats at table according to the rank of their families. The indignities to which Wise submitted on account of his humble birth may have had something to do with his subsequent leaning toward democracy. After he became a minister at Ipswich he led the opposition to the collection of taxes

imposed by the royalist government. For this he was arrested, fined, and imprisoned. The most important work of his later years was his reply to "Certain Proposals" put forth by the Boston Association of ministers in 1705. These proposals, for which the Mathers were doubtless responsible, advocated changes in the form of church government which would greatly increase the power of the clergy. This controversy was over ecclesiastical matters, but its significance may be seen from the fact that in the Revolutionary time, half a century after Wise's death, his *Vindication of the Government of New England Churches* was reprinted twice in a single year, and circulated as one of the best available expositions of the claims of democracy.

Samuel Willard (1640-1707), long pastor of the Old South Church, Boston, and for some time acting head of Harvard college, was a typical theologian of the old school. He published in 1726 *A Compleat Body of Divinity, in Two Hundred and Fifty Lectures on the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, and many other sermons. A famous minister of a somewhat later time was John Barnard (1681-1770), a native of Boston, a graduate of Harvard in the class of 1700. Barnard went to England for a time, where he was offered an official chaplaincy, but declined because he would not assent to the thirty-nine articles. In spite of this his association with churchmen and royalists brought him into some disrepute, and on his return to America he had difficulty in finding a pulpit. He was finally accepted by the church at Marblehead; but he was always somewhat unorthodox, and is sometimes said to have been the first New England minister to deviate from Calvinism. He published many sermons, some miscellaneous work, and a version of the Psalms. Charles Chauncy (1705-1787), pastor of the First Church of Boston for sixty years from 1727 to 1787, has a place in the political as well as the theological history of America. A



grandson of President Charles Chauncy of Harvard, he inherited some of the love of controversy that often distinguished Harvard divines. Of his sixty printed sermons a large part attack somebody or something. What he disliked he hated heartily. His aversion to poetry was such that he wanted "Paradise Lost" translated into prose. The preaching of Whitefield was especially distasteful to him, and he led the opposition to sensationalism in the pulpit. In the contest between England and the colonies he was a staunch patriot, and he expressed his views frankly in print.

The best example of the new and radical type of minister who was possible by the middle of the eighteenth century was

**Jonathan  
Mayhew**

Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766). He was a graduate of Harvard, and was pastor of the West Church in Boston from 1747 until his death. His present fame seems to rest on his heterodoxy and his patriotism, neither of them perhaps his most worthy characteristic. Even before his ordination he had expressed his disbelief in some of the fundamental doctrines of Calvinism, and during his pastorate he was denied the full fellowship of the Congregational ministers of Boston. Among other heresies he refused to accept the dogma of the Trinity, and it has been said that his church was the first in Boston to declare itself Unitarian. His habit of independent thinking was carried into political matters. In a sermon preached on the anniversary of the execution of King Charles I, and on other occasions, he expressed the view of government and political rights afterward advocated by his close friends, James Otis and Samuel Adams. These sermons on political subjects, and several others directed against the (Episcopalian) Society for the Propagation of the Gospel have an element of sensationalism. The preacher is not only frankly outspoken, but he shows a fondness for striking, even startling turns of phrase. His



sermons on other subjects are many of them free from this peculiarity, and have a freshness, a modern quality of style that makes them almost readable to-day.

In the departments of knowledge already considered—history and religion—the second period in New England pro-

**Little Pure Literature in New England**

duced writings that were, all things considered, very creditable. In what is sometimes called pure literature little was done, and that little was of small merit. In England the period under consideration saw the development of the periodical essay and of the novel. In America neither of these forms of writing was attempted. Novels were not only not written but it was forbidden to read them; and the Puritan boy was forced to content himself with stories of Indian adventure authenticated by the Reverend John Williams and other clerical captives. The Addisonian essay was echoed, if at all, in the brief comments and bits of moralizing to be found in the almanacs. Nathaniel Ames (1708-1764), of Dedham, Massachusetts, was for many years the editor of one of the more famous almanacs published in New England. His wise and witty sayings were evidently imitated, if not stolen, from English almanac-makers. The best of them do not equal the work of Poor Richard in Philadelphia.

In verse the later colonial period was almost as barren as in polite prose. The attention paid in England to poetic

**Verse** form could not be without some influence in

America; and New England dabblers in verse gradually came to realize that there were such things as rhythm and metre, and that they were of some importance. But there was no imagination corresponding to the improvement in form, and perhaps no one in the period was so well deserving the name of poet as was Anne Bradstreet or Michael Wigglesworth.

In the latter part of the seventeenth century verse was largely elegiac, if this term can be applied to the effusions inspired by the deaths of various persons.

**Elegiac Poetry** These memorial poems were mostly by ministers; and the best of them were by men who did little in verse. Among them are the "Elegy" upon the death of the Reverend Thomas Shepard, by Urian Oakes, and a "Dirge for the Tenth Muse" (Anne Bradstreet) by John Norton, pastor at Higham, Massachusetts. These seem to be the only surviving poetical work of their respective authors. Both show fair skill in versification, though with halting passages; both are pitched in the high artificial key of exaggerated lament so common in the seventeenth century, though they are without the conceits and quirks noticed in the memorial verses of the earlier period. The fashion of these conceits was preserved, however, in the work of Nicholas Noyes (1647-1717), long pastor at Salem. He was somewhat prolific of obituary and occasional poetry, and his love of puns and far-fetched turns of phrase was not exceeded by any of his predecessors.

Later in the period American versifiers, like their English contemporaries, yielded implicitly to the heroic couplet, and some of them acquired fair facility in its use. The Reverend John Adams, born in Nova Scotia in 1704, graduated at Harvard in 1721, and died at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1740, wrote poems in the conventional manner, which gave promise of better things. A few lines will give an impression of all:

Happy the man, who, in a calm of soul,  
Can all his warring passions' waves control;—  
Who stands unmoved, and hears the rustling wind  
Of malice strive to shake his steadfast mind;  
From whose clear breast full satisfaction boils,  
While in his cheeks rejoice the cheerful smiles.  
In vain would Envy with her harpy claws  
His peace destroy, or prey upon his joys.

Some of the serious verse of Mather Byles (1707-1788), who boasted a correspondence with Pope, is in the same manner. Anonymous examples may also be found in a congratulatory volume sent by Harvard college to King George III in 1761.

Besides the serious attempts, some beginnings of humorous verse appeared early in the eighteenth century. John Seccomb (1708-1792), a divinity student at Harvard, wrote some jingly verses which purported to be the last will of one Matthew Abdy, a bed-maker and handy man about the college. The opening stanzas run:

**Humorous  
Verse—John  
Seccomb**

To my dear wife  
My joy and life,  
I freely now do give her  
My whole estate,  
With all my plate,  
Being just about to leave her.

A tub of soap,  
A long cart rope,  
A frying pan & kettle,  
An ashen pail  
A threshing flail,  
An iron wedge and beetle.

This doggerel was sent to England and appeared simultaneously in the "London Magazine" and the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, 1732. Later it was reprinted in America with the title "Father Abbey's Will." To the reader of to-day it seems cheap, pointless, and vulgar. Why it was given recognition by the two leading literary magazines of England is hard to say. It must be remembered, however, that standards of humor were different in the eighteenth century. Even Goldsmith's "Elegy on a Mad Dog" does not now arouse the hilarity that it once did. "Father Abbey's Will" was followed by another poem in the same metre pur-

porting to be a proposal of marriage to his widow from the sweeper of Yale college.

A humorist of greater literary merit was Mather Byles, a descendant of Richard Mather and John Cotton, a Harvard graduate, and pastor of the Hollis street church in Boston from 1733 to the Revolution, when he was driven from his pulpit on account of his loyalist sympathies. His fame suffered somewhat from the fact that he took the unpopular side in the great struggle; but in the earlier years of his ministry he was known as a sound and eloquent pulpit orator, and in private life as a genial, witty gentleman. Many of his puns and jokes have come down to us in tradition. He wrote some serious verse, for example, "To his Excellency, Governor Belcher on the Death of his Lady, an Epistle," and "On the Death of the Queen, a Poem," and some hymns. His humorous verses include burlesque ballads and parodies.

Among the lesser versifiers of the eighteenth century should perhaps be remembered Mather Byles's friend, Joseph Green (1706-1780). The intimacy between the scholarly Tory clergyman and this wealthy Whig distiller must have arisen partly from the attraction of opposites, but they were fellow-graduates of Harvard and fellow-writers of humorous poetry. Green's verse was more satirical than that of his friend, and his humor was somewhat broader. He wrote a parody on Byles's fine "Hymn Written during a Voyage," and this was in turn parodied by Byles.

Besides the verses written by the ministers and men of culture there were crude attempts of the people—songs of the French and Indian wars, and ballads whose only merit was their rudeness and directness. Of these one is remembered, perhaps, more because its author, Peter Folger, was the grandfather of Benjamin

### **Mather Byles**

### **A Minor Humorist**

### **Peter Folger**

Franklin than for any merit of its own. Folger was an Englishman who came to America with his father in 1635, and settled first at Martha's Vineyard and afterward at Nantucket. His poem *A Looking Glass for the Times, or The former Spirit of New-England revived in this generation*, was a plea for toleration or rather an attack on those who were intolerant. Its occasion was the wars and afflictions that the colonists were experiencing about 1675. Like the members of the clerical party, he believed that these were a punishment from God, but he believed that they were inflicted, not because of laxity in faith, but because of narrowness and illiberality. A few lines will serve as a sample:

I would not have you for to think,  
tho' I have wrote so much,  
That I hereby do throw a Stone  
at Magistrates *as such*.  
The Rulers of the Country I  
do own them in the Lord ;  
And such as are for Government,  
with them I do accord.  
But that which I intend hereby,  
is that they would keep bound,  
And meddle not with God's Worship,  
for which they have no ground.

This ballad was written in 1675, and Franklin has been quoted as authority for the assertion that it was published in that year; but it is not clear that he intends to make this statement, and there is no other evidence of a printed edition until 1763. If the author discreetly kept his poem in manuscript, he hardly deserves all the praise that he has received for courage in speaking his mind.

Peter Folger, who comes just at the point of division between the first and the second periods, is of interest because he reveals a side of New England life but little seen anywhere in colonial literature. The writings that have been enumerated in the foregoing pages were produced mostly by the clergy.

They represent the spiritual aspirations, the theological questionings, the wild rhapsodical imaginings of the Puritans.

But there existed among the inhabitants of New England a tendency to be practical, to apply hard common sense to the everyday affairs of life in a very shrewd matter-of-fact way. The colonists amassed wealth. They drove hard bargains with the Indians, with their neighbors, even with one another. All this side of their character found little expression in literature. Printing, and even writing, were still serious matters, and only worthy thoughts were preserved on paper. Men who possessed both the devout and the worldly practical natures took pains to show only the former in their writings; and those who lived on the lower plane—the business men, the tradesmen, the artisans—hardly wrote at all. The student finds indications of this hard New England common sense in the implied objections answered by writers on theology and politics, in the treatment of witchcraft by men like Robert Calef, in the more personal parts of Sewall's *Diary*, in anecdotes of the Franklin family as told in Benjamin's *Autobiography*, and in comments by visitors from the old world and from other colonies. Notwithstanding the fact that it makes so slight a figure in colonial writings, it had great influence on New England literature of a later date.

In conclusion, it may be said that the writings of the later colonial time in New England were characterized by intellectual power, but by esthetic barrenness.

**Limitations of  
New England  
Literature**

Even this praise needs some modification; for the same tendencies that prevented graceful expression led also to a narrowness, a lack of that sane and healthful view of things that is essential to the highest intellectual activity. The ablest and most learned men of the time showed pedantry rather than scholar-



ship, ingenuity rather than analytic insight. Even Jonathan Edwards, the greatest of them all, is not wholly an exception to this statement. Their lack of a true literary sense was in part due directly to defects in the Puritan character, and more largely to the fact that the Puritans denied themselves the examples of the greater English masters. While the Virginian was following every whim of literary fashion, the Massachusetts writer continued almost in the manner of 1620, unmoved by even the strongest literary tendencies. Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards were early and late contemporaries of William Byrd, yet his work seems far more modern than that of either. The result of all this was that the latest of the Puritans gave to their descendants the example of mental industry, learning, and intense moral earnestness, but they left them with no sense of literary form, and indeed with no adequate appreciation of its value. This one-sided heritage must be kept in mind in studying the later development of literature in New England.

#### IV. THE MIDDLE COLONIES

The middle colonies were founded somewhat later than Massachusetts. Most of them made less careful provision for education; but they had an advantage in containing many settlers of broader views and more catholic taste. Next after Boston the city which achieved greatest literary prominence during the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century was Philadelphia. It is worthy of note that the most distinguished author of Philadelphia was a man who received his early training in Boston, but who represented the practical side of the New England character, and who fortunately escaped to the freer atmosphere of the Quaker city.

Benjamin Franklin's long life of eighty-four years (1706-1790) spanned the period of the Revolution, and saw the

establishment of the national government. The political services for which he is best remembered were performed in the later period, and it was toward the close of his life that he wrote the *Autobiography*, from a literary standpoint his most important work. But the man himself was a product of the colonial time, and as the man and his writings are so closely connected it seems best to consider him among colonial writers.

**Benjamin  
Franklin**

Franklin was born in Boston in 1706. Peter Folger, his grandfather on the maternal side, has already been mentioned. On his father's side he was descended from a line of thrifty artisans, many members of the family having been blacksmiths. His father was trained as a dyer, but on removing to New England he found this trade in little demand and became a maker of soap and candles. Benjamin was the fifteenth in a family of seventeen children. He was first intended for the ministry, but the family income was too small to admit of giving him a college education, and after a brief schooling, he was set to work in his father's shop. At this he rebelled, and wanted to go to sea. At length, when he was twelve years of age, his father, noticing his fondness for reading, apprenticed him to his brother James, who was a printer. Even before this time he had read through his father's library, which "consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity," and had saved his pennies to buy Bunyan's works, which he sold again to procure Burton's *Historical Collections*. The same devotion to reading was continued throughout his apprenticeship. He boarded himself, and subsisted on a vegetable diet, expending for books what he could save from his allowance for food. An odd volume of the *Spectator* fell into his hands, and on this he deliberately modeled his prose style.

His first attempt at writing was not, however, in prose but in verse. Early in his apprenticeship he composed two

ballads, one on the drowning of a light-house keeper and his two daughters, the other on the capture of Blackbeard, a pirate who had long infested the New England coast. These were printed by James Franklin and peddled about the streets by the author. They were very successful, but the boy was dissuaded by his father from further attempts at verse-making. His next literary venture was when he was sixteen years of age. By this time his brother had founded the "New England Courant," and for this Benjamin wrote the "Dogood Papers," on the Addisonian model. Fearing that his brother would ignore anything coming from him, he at first disguised his hand and slipped the manuscript under the office door. After several numbers had been printed and warmly praised he revealed himself as the author.

Franklin thus entered the world of letters at a time when Samuel Sewall was writing his diary and Increase and Cotton Mather were laboring for the continuance of the old ecclesiastical order in New England. As has been said, however, he represented a class far different from that to which these worthies belonged. In the Franklin family, as we catch glimpses of it in the *Autobiography*, we see the characteristics, good and bad, which have since been associated with the word "Yankee." On the one hand were industry, economy, shrewdness, and a determination to keep within the letter of the law; on the other hand was a disposition to believe that these virtues constituted the whole duty of man. The greatest test was always "Does it pay?" One reason that led the elder Franklin to give up the idea of educating Benjamin for the ministry was "the little encouragement that line of life afforded." Later he dissuaded him from writing ballads by telling him that "verse-makers were generally beggars."

**Franklin's  
Early Writing**

**Franklin's  
"Yankee"  
Characteristics**

Another example of shrewdness, carried beyond the limit of strict ethics, is seen in James Franklin's management of the "New England Courant." As editor he seems to have discovered that sensationalism may be financially profitable to a newspaper; and his constant aim was apparently to see how far he could go without incurring punishment from the strait-laced rulers of Boston. At last he over-stepped the line, was arrested, imprisoned, and forbidden to issue the paper longer. Instead of discontinuing its publication he adopted the subterfuge of printing it in Benjamin's name. Accordingly the articles of apprenticeship were publicly cancelled, and a secret agreement was drawn in their stead. Benjamin was quick to see that these secret articles were not binding on him, since James would not dare to make them public. He therefore snapped his fingers in his brother's face and ran away to Philadelphia.

The details of his trip, and his first adventures in the Quaker city, are told in one of the most familiar parts of the *Autobiography*. He secured employment with Samuel Keimer, an erratic printer who was something of a figure in the early life of Philadelphia. Soon he attracted the attention of Governor Keith, who offered him patronage and sent him to England to buy types and a press for a printing office of his own. Arrived there, he found that he had been duped, and that Keith had given him neither the introductions nor the credit that he had promised. He remained in London for eighteen months, working in different printing-offices, reading much, meeting some persons of note, and writing a free-thinking pamphlet, "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain." When he returned to Philadelphia he served as bookkeeper and general assistant to a merchant; but in a few months his employer died and he again became a printer, first in the employ of Keimer, then in an office of

**Franklin in  
Philadelphia**

his own. By his industry and the shrewd tricks that he knew so well how to plan he succeeded, and soon became a prominent citizen. He was instrumental in founding the public library; he organized the first fire company in Philadelphia, headed the movement for a better police system, and was concerned with many other municipal improvements.

The events of Franklin's early life have been given in some detail because they are so valuable in showing the forces that went to the forming of the man, and also in illustrating the class of New England citizens to which he belonged. His later years must, in spite of their importance to the student of history, be passed over more hurriedly. By 1748 he had prospered so well that he sold his printing-office for a comfortable sum, and proposed to devote himself to the study of science, for which he had developed a fondness. His best-known experiments are those with electricity, but he made excursions into various fields, and communicated the results of his researches to scientific men in Europe and America. He had already dabbled in politics, and in 1752 he was elected to the colonial assembly, and was later made postmaster-general. From 1757 to 1761 he was in London as agent of the colonial assembly. In 1764 he was again sent to London on a political mission and remained until 1775, taking a prominent part in all the agitation that preceded the Revolution. Shortly after his return to America he was sent to France to negotiate for aid in the struggle for independence. He remained in Paris, an idol of the French people, until 1785, serving his country in various ways, finally as member of the peace commission. After his return to Philadelphia, though over eighty years of age, he was still active in public affairs. His last work of importance was as member of the Constitutional Convention.

Franklin's published works, which in the standard editions

fill ten heavy volumes, cover a multitude of subjects—theology, science, politics, morals, even literary criticism. His fame as a man of letters rests, however, on three works: the “Poor Richard” sayings, the *Autobiography*, and the “Bagatelles.” It was in 1732, not long after he had established himself in business on his own account, that he began the publication of “Poor Richard’s Almanac.” In putting forth this work he adopted the name of Richard Saunders, an English almanac-maker of note, but he gave the assumed author the character of a poor but thrifty American. The hint of Poor Richard probably came from the characters in the *Spectator*, but it is perhaps because he is so much like Franklin himself that he and his wife Bridget “are quite as real as any characters in the whole domain of fiction.” These almanacs were introduced by prefaces that tried to be both witty and instructive. They contained the usual calendars and astronomical data, predictions concerning the weather, suggestions in regard to crops, and scattered here and there wise saws and pointed sayings. It is these last that have made Poor Richard famous.

The ethical code of the almanac-maker did not require that these sayings be original, and many that bear Franklin’s name were not his own. It is now impossible to say which he originated, which he borrowed entire, and which he adapted to suit the occasion. The majority probably belong to the last-named class. But he deserves the credit of making them all pass current. After Poor Richard had become widely known he combined the best of his sayings in an address purporting to have been delivered at an auction by an old man known as Father Abraham. It was in this discourse, sometimes called “The Way to Wealth,” that a later generation usually read Poor Richard’s advice. A paragraph will serve as an illustration:



*If time be of all Things the most precious, wasting Time must be, as Poor Richard says, the greatest Prodigality; since, as he elsewhere tells us, Lost Time is never found again; and what we call Time enough, always proves little enough: Let us then up and be doing, and doing to the Purpose; so by Diligence shall we do more with less Perplexity. Sloth makes all Things difficult, but Industry all easy, as Poor Richard says; and He that riseth late must trot all Day, and shall scarce overtake his Business at Night; while Laziness travels so slowly, that Poverty soon overtakes him, as we read in Poor Richard, who adds, Drive thy Business, let not that drive thee; and Early to Bed and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy, and wise.*

The influence of the Poor Richard sayings is hardly to be overestimated. They were published in the most popular almanac of the colonial time; and publication in an almanac was the surest way to secure wide circulation. No family was so poor as to be without one of these necessary pamphlets; and often it was the only secular reading matter that the house contained. During the year that it was current its contents were read so often that they were committed to memory by young and old. The best of the proverbs were also circulated in the "Address of Father Abraham," and in various other forms. It is safe to say that for a hundred years no phrases except those of Scripture were so familiar to Americans everywhere as those of Poor Richard; and many of them gained equal currency abroad. Even to-day, when the habit of quoting wise saws has almost fallen into disuse, they are by no means forgotten.

The *Autobiography* was begun in 1771, while Franklin was in England, but was soon laid aside. At the urgent request of friends it was taken up from time to time until 1788, when the last installment was written. It traces the author's life only to 1757, but it covers the years that are most interesting to the student of Franklin the man. The qualities which have made the *Autobiography* one of the few American classics

Franklin's  
Autobiography

are its simplicity of style and the frankness and openness with which the author reveals his personality. Few books can charm readers of all ages and all temperaments; Franklin's *Autobiography* comes very near doing this. It is the first book written in America which an American to-day need hesitate to say he has not read.

The "Bagatelles" were short sketches written while Franklin was in France to please a circle of his intimate friends.

**The Bagatelles** The best were composed for Madame Brillon, a French woman whose society he especially enjoyed. Among them are the "Story of the Whistle," and the "Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout," once in every school reader, but now less familiar. These embody the author's philosophy of life, but, owing perhaps to French influence, they have not quite the naturalness and genuineness of the Poor Richard sayings and the *Autobiography*.

Franklin as statesman and Franklin as scientist cannot be considered here; yet it must be remembered that he

**Franklin as Man of Letters** was more important, to the minds of contemporaries at least, in these rôles than in that of literary man. Indeed, in the strict

sense of the word he can hardly be called a man of letters. His own prose style is excellent, and he appreciated work of the same simple, straightforward sort; but he does not seem really to have possessed much taste in regard to other forms of literature. He enjoyed dabbling in literary criticism, but his judgments are likely to be commonplace or amusingly erroneous. He does not seem even to have appreciated the majestic prose of the Bible. He gravely wrote an emendation of the Lord's Prayer, with reasons for each change; and later, when in France, he produced a modernized version of the first part of Job. Probably this last bit of composition is not to be taken seriously. If not, it at least shows that he was willing to parody the work of the Hebrew poet. His

own verse compositions, with the exception of a drinking song of doubtful authenticity, are worthless.

Franklin is sometimes spoken of as a great moral teacher. Such praise only calls attention to his weakness. An examination of his writings will show that he taught only the prudential virtues—how to be healthy, wealthy, and wise, rather than how to be good, except as a matter of policy. His own morals in early life were very loose. His only son who survived infancy was an illegitimate child; and he was engaged in intrigues with women in London and in Philadelphia until the time of his marriage. In his *Autobiography* he speaks of these affairs with regret, but his reason is that they “were attended with some expense and great inconvenience, besides a continual risk to my health.” Even in his later years he produced writings so obscene that no editor has ventured to print them. His moral weaknesses, and the fact that he adopted worldly prosperity as the test of success in life, have led to some adverse criticism of Franklin as a man, among which is a remark attributed to Jefferson Davis that he was “the incarnation of the peddling, tuppenny Yankee.” In response to this it is sufficient to say that, many-sided as his character was, we cannot expect to find it universal. He had personal faults and his precepts do not constitute a complete rule of conduct, but none of them teach immorality, and most of them have, directly or indirectly, a moral tendency. He made Poor Richard say, “It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright,” and he always maintained that the most practical way to make men virtuous was to remove temptation by making them thrifty, prosperous, and contented.

Franklin should be remembered for his connection with both the New England and the Middle colonies. As has been seen, he represents one side, and only one side, of the

New England character. He was wholly without religious mysticism or fine idealism, but he was in every way typical of the shrewd, practical, hard-headed Yankee. **Franklin's Position** And in Pennsylvania he had an opportunity to develop his bent as he never could have done under the eye of the Puritan ministers and magistrates. It may or may not be reasonable and fortunate that he is often cited as the embodiment of the true American spirit; but he was a power in his own and succeeding generations, and he still remains the best known American writer of the colonial time.

In population Pennsylvania was the most heterogeneous of the colonies, the settlers comprising Germans, Moravians, Welsh, Scotch-Irish, and Swedes. Some of **Intellectual Conditions in Pennsylvania** these people cared little for learning, and in many outlying districts nothing was done for education. In Philadelphia and other communities where the Quakers were numerous schools were early established, and were second in number and quality only to those of New England. A printing press was set up, and as the colony allowed freedom in the expression of belief, works of many kinds were published unmolested. The first magazine in America was issued in Philadelphia; and the first public library really deserving the name was started there. There was no college until 1755, but when the University of Pennsylvania was founded in that year it was with a much broader purpose than that which led to the establishment of Harvard for the education of ministers.

In the *Autobiography* Franklin preserves the records of several lesser writers of Philadelphia. On his first visit to Samuel Keimer (?-1738), the printer who **Minor Philadelphia Writers** gave him employment, he found that gentleman at the case, composing, in a double sense of the word, an elegy on Aquilla Rose (1695?-1723). Rose

had been an assistant in Keimer's shop, and had written a number of promising verses, afterward collected as *Poems on Several Occasions*. Keimer himself produced a considerable amount of prose and verse on various subjects. James Ralph (1695?-1762), who afterward became a successful London hack-writer, was a Philadelphian, and accompanied Franklin on his first visit to England. Other young men of literary tastes are mentioned in the *Autobiography* as members of Franklin's famous club, "The Junto."

A more important Philadelphia writer was Thomas Godfrey (1736-1763). After a brief attendance at school he was apprenticed to a watchmaker. He served as a lieutenant in the militia during the campaign of 1758, and the next year went to North Carolina, where he spent much of the time until his death. During his brief lifetime he wrote several poems in which critics have found much promise, and the "Prince of Parthia," so far as is known the first tragedy written in America. This, as the name implies, is an oriental tale, and the plot depends on the familiar motives of political ambition and jealousy in love. It offers a goodly share of battles, intrigues, and crimes, and closes with the suicide of the hero and the heroine. It is written in blank verse, which the author does not handle so successfully as some of the lyric measures of his shorter poems. It would be foolish, however, to criticise the "Prince of Parthia" by any strict standard. It is the work of an unschooled boy of twenty-three years, who knew nothing of the stage, and had seen few if any plays. All things considered, it was not a discreditable attempt at a form of writing hitherto untried in America. It was played in Philadelphia April 24, 1767, but no details of the performance are known.

In one department of knowledge—natural science—Philadelphia easily surpassed all other colonial cities. It is true that

many New England divines—Cotton Mather for example—made observations in natural history, and were prolific of theories regarding natural phenomena. But

**Philadelphia  
Writers on  
Science**

in Philadelphia popular interest was more general, and there was more of the modern spirit of investigation and experimentation. Franklin is the best known of the Philadelphia writers on science. Among others was John Bartram (1699-1777), who founded the first botanical garden in America, and made extended excursions in search of specimens. Like Franklin, Bartram was a self-made man. James Godfrey (1704-1749), the father of Thomas Godfrey the poet, was a mathematician and inventor of what was later known as Hadley's quadrant. A still more distinguished mathematician and scientist was David Rittenhouse (1732-1796), who made several valuable inventions, and achieved international fame by his observations of the transit of Venus in 1769.

During the colonial time New York produced relatively little literature of importance. When the English took pos-

session of the colony in 1664 they apparently caught something of the easy-going, pleasure-loving spirit of the Dutch settlers; and the little enterprise and activity that they showed was along commercial rather than intellectual lines. There was no such body of learned men as the New England clergy, and little attention was paid to the popular diffusion of knowledge. Schools were few and poor. Kings College, founded in 1754, and after the Revolution known as Columbia College, was for a time so involved in factional disputes that it accomplished little good.

Like the other colonies, New York produced some accounts of the physical attractions of the country, and histories of contemporary events. One of the best of these was the *History of the Five Indian Nations* by Cadawallader Colden



(1688-1776). Colden was the son of a Scotch minister. He came to Pennsylvania, and later to New York, where he practiced medicine, and held various political offices. He took great interest in the troubles between the French and the colonies, and his history was written to show the relation of the Iroquois to this contest. The first part was published in New York in 1727, and a continuation in London in 1747. It contains a large number of well-told anecdotes, and reports of speeches by Indian chieftains. Besides practicing his profession and engaging in politics Colden dabbled in many departments of natural science, and was a correspondent of Linnæus, and other learned men. William Livingston (1723-1790), a native of Albany, a graduate of Yale in the class of 1741, and afterward a lawyer and politician in New York, occasionally tried his hand at verse. In 1747 he published *Philosophic Solitude*, a moralizing and satiric poem in mediocre heroic couplets. He also wrote some minor verse and some controversial works in prose. He shows, more than most of his contemporaries, the direct influence of Pope.

**New York  
Writers**

## CHAPTER II

### THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD (1765-1800)

#### I. CONTROVERSIAL WRITINGS

In the middle of the eighteenth century literature in America showed no strong characteristics and no very definite tendencies. The religious intensity that inspired so much of the earlier writing was ceasing to be dominant, even in New England, and nothing was taking its place. People in America were coming more fully to realize that there was an English literature; and in a blind and half-hearted way they were beginning to imitate it, particularly in those forms which are always associated with the eighteenth century. In all parts of the country were men who rhymed in the heroic couplet and imitated the prose of the *Spectator*. In the more liberal colonies others attempted the drama, and made some slight efforts suggested by English fiction. But there was little life to any of this, and it could have had but little vital interest for contemporary readers. It is not strange, therefore, that when the country was stirred by great political excitement, all writing should be concerned, closely or remotely, with the new ideas.

For at least a quarter of a century from the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 the most important writings in America dealt with the great political questions then before the people. Until the Declaration of Independence there was heated discussion of the rights of the colonies. During the war there was enthusiastic patriotism and bitter hatred of England, met, of course, by the opposite feeling on the part of the loyal-

**General Literary  
Conditions**

**Writings Mostly  
Political**

ists in America. After peace was declared there were differences of opinion regarding the nature of the new government. When the Constitution was finally adopted, and Washington was inaugurated President, there was an increased feeling of nationality, and a disposition to exalt the United States and the principles for which it stood. So closely did literary expression follow changes in popular thought that each of these periods of political development might be considered a period in the history of American literature. For convenience, however, it is better to consider as a whole the years from the passage of the Stamp Act to the close of the century. This is the more desirable because as a rule the authors who were writing before the opening of the war continued after its close. The Revolution was a young men's movement; and while not all the leaders lived, as did John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, a full fifty years after the Declaration of Independence, yet many of them continued active throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century.

During the early part of the period the most numerous and in every way the most important writings are those that argue questions of colonial rights—the orations, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and state papers which present various phases of the many-sided controversy. At first thought it might seem that such productions hardly require notice in a history of literature. Those of this time merit consideration in detail, however, not simply because they were the chief products of literary activity in America from 1765 to 1789, but because they influenced in a great degree the literary taste and the later prose style of the country.

The number and variety of these political writings is appallingly large. In the colonies where education was general, almost every town had its pamphleteers, or its

**Controversial  
Writings**

writers for the public press. It is noticeable, however, that most of the productions that have survived in remembrance are the work of authors who are known for other achievements than those of the pen. The ablest men in business and the professions took a hand in the controversy, and it is with their work that the student is chiefly concerned.

The earlier difficulties between the colonies and the mother country centered in New England; and it was New Eng-

land men who first became prominent in the discussion. Among the earliest of these was

#### James Otis

James Otis (1725-1783), a native of Massachusetts, a graduate of Harvard, and at the time discussion over colonial rights began, a prominent lawyer of Boston, with an especial reputation for success in criminal cases. In 1760 he published *The Rudiments of Latin Prosody*, for some time used as a textbook at Harvard college, but his other writings show little trace of the scholarly temperament. His first important appearance in political affairs was in 1761, when he made his famous argument before the Superior court of Massachusetts in opposition to writs of assistance. Tradition gives this speech great importance, and there is no doubt that it made a strong impression on those who heard it. There remain to us only some brief notes of the argument, taken by John Adams.

Otis published several pamphlets, of which the most important were, *A Vindication of the Conduct of the House of*

*Representatives of the Province of the Massa-*  
**Otis's Pamphlets** *chusetts Bay and The Rights of the British*

*Colonies Asserted and Proved.* The former of these was concerned with a controversy between the assembly and the royal governor, who had, it was claimed, exceeded his power in increasing the colonial defenses without legislative consent. The second, issued in 1764, was one of the many pamphlets discussing the relations between the colonies and Great Brit-

ain, and dealt at some length with the nature of government and other questions of abstract political right. This is more moderate than most of the author's writings, and is, according to Professor Tyler, "the one work of Otis on which rests his reputation as a serious political thinker"; but it is less typical of the author, and probably was less popular in its day than the *Vindication*, or the later answers to the "Gentleman at Halifax." The most noticeable characteristic of these pamphlets is a rough and ready style, and a tendency to jumble together fact, argument, nonsense, and personalities, sometimes in confusing fashion. In this connection it is interesting to note that even in the early years of the Revolutionary agitation Otis showed some eccentricities, and that when, in 1769, he was the victim of a personal assault by political enemies he became hopelessly insane.

Another writer on the colonial side who began his work during the early years of the controversy was Samuel Adams (1722-1803). He was born in Boston and **Samuel Adams** was graduated at Harvard in 1740. After his graduation he took up the study of law, abandoned this for business, and became, so far as his personal affairs were concerned, a ne'er-do-weel, subsisting on the small returns of a tax-collectorship and on the contributions of friends. Time which he might have devoted to his own business he gave to public affairs.

Though Samuel Adams probably wrote more than any other politician of the time, he published little over his own name. The most numerous class of his writings consisted of letters to the newspapers and for these he is known to have used at least twenty-five different signatures. He was also prominent in town-meeting, assembly, and congress, and the most effective parts of the many reports, addresses, and memorials issued by these bodies are often ascribed to him.

Some of these public documents are able productions, characterized by logical method and a direct, dignified style. The letters to newspapers, and the personal letters that his biographer reprints, differ in tone according to the subject and occasion. The power of the author lay in the fact that he could appeal to almost every human motive, even the low and the transient, and yet could so guard himself that he had "nothing to retract." He was, in short, a consummate politician, who used his pen effectively for political purposes.

John Adams (1735-1826), the more famous cousin of Samuel, was also a graduate of Harvard, and a resident of Boston. He took part in the agitation over

**John Adams**

the Stamp Act, and from this time almost to his death he was a fairly prolific writer on politics and government, and incidentally on other subjects. His first important work was four papers published in the Boston Gazette in 1765, and afterward collected as an *Essay on the Canon and Feudal Law*. This he followed by other pamphlets and contributions to newspapers, among which was a series of articles signed "Novangelus" in response to Daniel Leonard, who wrote on the Tory side over the name "Massachusettensis." In 1776 he was a member of the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence, but the work was done by Jefferson. From 1778 to 1788 he was most of the time on foreign missions, and had little chance to take part in controversies at home; but he published some articles on America in newspapers abroad, and in 1787 brought out in London the first volume of *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. This work was later continued in two volumes more, and a sequel, entitled "Discourses of Davilla," was begun in the "Gazette of the United States" in 1789, but was discontinued on account of the political protests that it aroused.



Adams's personal letters during this period are also of great interest.

Unlike his cousin, John Adams had little of the art which conceals the writer's personality and adapts modes of expression to special occasions and special classes of readers. In style nearly all his writings are representative of the man himself. From early years he was a theorist on the nature of government. In his controversial writings he appeals to general principles rather than to temporary prejudices. Thus, his contribution to the discussion of the Stamp Act began with a general consideration of the canon and the feudal law. The *Defense of the Constitutions* is based on a detailed study of all representative governments from the earliest times. It might seem that this method of dealing with living political questions would be tedious and ineffectual; but John Adams, though a theorist, was by nature a partisan and an advocate, and, especially in his early writings, usually carried his readers with him. He had, however, a certain fondness for what may be called the legal mode of expression which sometimes interfered with his directness. It is interesting to compare in respect to style his draft for the constitution of Massachusetts, written in 1779, and the constitution of the United States. His well-known petulance and uncertainty of temper are seen most plainly in his personal letters, but often make themselves manifest in his later writings intended for publication.

James Otis, Samuel Adams, and John Adams represent respectively three classes of patriotic controversialists—the enthusiastic but often illogical agitator, the crafty manipulator of meetings and writer of communications to the press, and the trained legal thinker who supported his position by appeals to history and to the fundamental principles of jurispru-

#### Adams's Literary Method

#### Three Types of Controversialists

dence. Other pamphleteers attracted equal or greater attention for the moment, but these three now seem to stand out with the greatest prominence.

Of the loyalist writers of Massachusetts the most notable was Daniel Leonard (1740-1829), already mentioned as an adversary of John Adams. He was a native of the colony, a graduate of Harvard, and engaged in the practice of law in Boston until he was forced to leave on account of his loyalist principles. In 1774-5 he published in a Boston paper the series of letters signed "Massachusettensis." These are probably the strongest statements of the loyalist case that appeared in New England, and for fairness of tone and excellence of literary manner were hardly surpassed by any pamphlets of the Revolution on either side. Indeed, their excellence is so great that it seems to have relieved Leonard from the suspicion of their authorship. John Adams himself was for many years convinced that they were the work of his friend Jonathan Sewall.

Few political pamphleteers in the New England colonies other than Massachusetts deserve mention for the literary quality of their work. In Rhode Island Governor Stephen Hopkins (1707-1785) issued in 1765 *The Rights of Colonies Examined*, a pamphlet in which he sets forth his views with the force and directness of a man who in earlier life had been farmer, land surveyor, merchant, and ship-builder. In response there appeared the earliest loyalist pamphlet of importance—*A Letter from a Gentleman at Halifax to his Friend in Rhode Island*, in which the loyalist claims are presented in the frank and informal manner which might be used in a personal letter. The author was Martin Howard, of Newport, a man in regard to whom biographical information is scanty and strangely unsatisfactory.

**Lesser  
New England  
Pamphleteers**

In the controversies which followed the Revolution, particularly that over the adoption of the Constitution, New England took a prominent part; but no work produced in this section of the country is worthy to be classed with *The Federalist*, or, indeed, is of sufficient importance to need mention in a literary history. In the closing years of the century the most noted New England orator, and one of the most popular of the New England essayists, was Fisher Ames (1758-1808). He was a Harvard graduate of 1774, a prominent member of the Massachusetts bar, and held various political offices. His most famous speech was delivered in congress in 1796 in favor of Jay's treaty with Great Britain. His political essays, contributed to Boston papers, were in the English eighteenth century manner, and bore such signatures as "Camillus," "Laocoön," "Falkland," "Phocion," etc. He was a master of a forceful and effective formal style, and his admirers, who gave him the nickname of "the American Burke," were wont to amuse themselves by pointing out his resemblances to his supposed prototype. He deserves to be remembered for his influence on the next generation of American orators.

While the political situation in the middle colonies was at first not so acute as in Boston, yet there were a great number of controversial writings in the years immediately preceding the Revolution. In New York the most prominent of the loyalist pamphleteers was Samuel Seabury (1729-1796), before the war pastor of a church in Westchester, and after its close consecrated the first bishop of the American Episcopal church. In 1774 he attacked the Continental congress in three pamphlets signed "A Farmer," or "A. W. Farmer," and he is also supposed to have been the author of some less important papers. The "Westchester Farmer" pamphlets purport to

be written by a plain man to others of his class; and the author succeeded in adapting his arguments to the common people without undue cheapness or lack of dignity.

Among the many writers who replied to the "Westchester Farmer" the most important was Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804), then a boy of seventeen in attendance

**Alexander  
Hamilton**

at King's, now Columbia, college. Hamilton

was a native of the West Indies who had been forced by family misfortunes to enter a business office before he was thirteen years of age, and had shown such ability that, through the kindness of friends, he was sent to America for an education. His precocity is nowhere better shown than in the grasp of the entire subject of controversy manifested in his two pamphlets in reply to Seabury. At times his style has a terseness and definiteness that he may have acquired in part while writing business letters in the counting house at Jamaica. His few attempts at humor are only moderately successful, and the part of the pamphlet addressed especially to farmers, while logically sound, is more artificially wrought than the rest.

As Hamilton continued to write controversial documents, and during much of the Revolution aided Washington in

**The Federalist**

his correspondence, his style improved until

it was nearly or quite at its best in the *Federalist*. This remarkable series of papers, published in New York during 1787-8 with a view to influencing public sentiment in favor of the proposed constitution, is the most famous and probably the most valuable political treatise that America has produced. Written as a controversial document, and printed in a newspaper during a political campaign, it has come to be regarded as an authority on the nature and principles of the American government, and is quoted by writers on constitutional law as almost equal in weight to the constitution itself. Its reputation rests mainly on its content;

but it never could have been so authoritative at home, or have won such admiration abroad, if the great ideas which it sets forth had not been expressed with fitting simplicity, dignity, and clearness. So free is the work from tricks and mannerisms that it seems impossible to determine from internal evidence the authorship of several disputed numbers. Hamilton originated the idea and certainly wrote more than half the papers. John Jay (1745-1829), another New York publicist, contributed a few, and James Madison somewhat more. The few whose authorship is disputed lie between Hamilton and Madison.

In 1793 Hamilton wrote a series of essays signed "Pacif-  
 icus" in which he advocated neutrality, and endeavoured to  
 offset the effects of the Genet agitation; later  
**Hamilton's** he published another series signed "Camillus"  
**Later Writings** in support of the Jay treaty. The great mass  
 of his published writings consist of letters and state papers  
 written while he was serving the government in various  
 capacities. Almost any of these documents illustrates Ham-  
 iltion's excellence as a political writer, but none of them  
 approaches the *Federalist* in importance.

It must not be forgotten that during the Revolution the  
 most distinguished patriot of Pennsylvania was Benjamin  
 Franklin, whose literary activities were con-  
**Pennsylvania—** sidered in the preceding chapter. Franklin  
**Benjamin** was abroad from 1764 to 1775, and from 1776  
**Franklin** to 1785, and America missed the witty and  
 telling arguments and comments on events which he would  
 surely have written if he had been at home during the most  
 exciting years of the struggle. While in England he con-  
 tributed to the London papers various articles intended to  
 help the colonies, and the report of his examination before  
 the House of Commons in 1766 was often reprinted and  
 proved a valuable campaign document.

The most prominent loyalist of Pennsylvania was Joseph Galloway (1729-1803), a personal friend and at one time a political associate of Franklin. In the first Continental congress he proposed a plan for home rule which is said to have been satisfactory to the government, but which was rejected by a vote of six colonies to five. It was virtually this plan which he expounded in the most notable of his many pamphlets, *A candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great Britain and the Colonies; with a Plan of Accommodation on Constitutional Principles*. The tone of this discussion is on the whole moderate, as was befitting one who was pleading for mutual concessions. The author does not, however, succeed in concealing his contempt for what he considers quibbling arguments of his opponents—for example the claim that Americans were subjects of the crown but not of Parliament, or that Parliament had a right to lay duties for the purpose of regulating trade, but not of raising revenue.

The most expert manipulator of these fine-drawn distinctions that so irritated Galloway was John Dickinson (1732-1808). Like Galloway, he was a native of Maryland. He studied law in Philadelphia and London, and later held many important positions in both Pennsylvania and Maryland. His contributions to controversial literature won for him the name of "Penman of the Revolution," and his latest editor says, "From no other leader of that movement originated a series of arguments of half the number, importance, or popularity." The number of his writings is certainly large, and there is abundant evidence of their popularity and influence. Nevertheless, the reader who makes their acquaintance for the first time is likely to be disappointed. There is, as Galloway charged, a great deal of hair-splitting; and the style, while clear, is not in any way attractive or remarkable. The controversial



articles seem better calculated to please those already convinced than to make new converts.

Dickinson's writings include many state papers, beginning with the declaration of rights and the petition to the king adopted by the Stamp Act congress, and continuing through most of the war. He was also a prolific writer of pamphlets and contributions to newspapers. The most famous of these is the *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*, which were published in 1767-8 and quickly attracted great attention at home and abroad. Unlike Seabury, Dickinson made no attempt to keep up the character of a farmer; but the style of the *Letters* is more direct and forcible than that of many of his writings. Dickinson's services did not end with the war, but when the ratification of the constitution was under consideration he supported it in a series of letters signed "Fabius," much in the manner of his earlier work. His once famous "Liberty Song" will be mentioned in another connection.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809), who came to Pennsylvania in 1774, soon became one of the most famous citizens of the colony. He was born in England, where he had a not very prosperous career as stay-maker, exciseman, and usher at a school. At length Franklin, then in England, was struck by the excellence of a statement of grievances which he had drawn up for his brother excisemen, and offered him letters to friends in America. Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia he secured the editorship of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*. His few months of editorial work were evidently of great service in developing his literary style. Early in 1776 he published *Common Sense*, his first political pamphlet, and the first important tract advocating the independence of the colonies. From this time until the close of the war he was in the service of the country, with the army, as secretary of the committee of congress on foreign

affairs, and as envoy to France. He also found time to write on political topics. His most important work of this period was *The Crisis*, a series of papers which appeared at intervals during the war, and had for its object to revive the spirits of the colonists, and to arouse public opinion in support of the military operations. The first number begins:

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.

After peace was declared, Paine went abroad. He was outlawed from England on account of his *Rights of Man*, an answer to Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, published in 1791. In France he became a member of the National convention, opposed the execution of the king, and was imprisoned for a year. When he regained his liberty he censured Washington for not attempting to secure his release, and in this way alienated many friends in America. A year or two later he published *The Age of Reason*, a work which long made his name a synonym for irreligion and atheism. Afterward he returned to America, where he died in 1809.

This reference to Paine's foreign career is necessary because his later unpopularity was often remembered when his earlier fame was forgotten. When he left America at the close of the war few men were more generally esteemed for their services to the country; and it is conceded by most later historians that no contemporary writings exercised such influence as did *Common Sense* and *The Crisis*. It must be

#### Paine's Foreign Career

admitted that in most of Paine's work there is here and there to be found a flippancy, a certain vulgar quality, offensive not only to his opponents but to the judicial minded; and this quality is especially noticeable in his later writings, such as the letter to Washington and *The Age of Reason*. The Revolutionary pamphlets are relatively free from this fault. *Common Sense*, especially the central and important section entitled "Thoughts on the Present State of the American Affairs," is characterized by plain, effective speaking, not often lacking in dignity. *The Crisis*, though it rarely rises to the height of the opening sentences quoted above, is probably the best written of Paine's important works. It is true that the arguments are sometimes specious, and that an appeal is sometimes made to prejudices, but this is only saying that the essays were well planned to accomplish their purpose.

**Paine's Literary  
Manner**

The political literature of the South during the Revolution was less in amount than that of the North, but not inferior in quality. Patrick Henry (1736-1799) began his career early in the controversy. He was of good, though not aristocratic, birth. At first he tried farming and trade, and succeeded in losing most of the money that he had received from his father and his father-in-law. He then studied law and soon acquired a reputation as a successful advocate. In 1765 he was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses, and after this he held various political offices, among them member of the first Continental congress and governor of Virginia. He opposed the adoption of the constitution, but became reconciled to it after the first ten amendments were adopted. In later life he was offered the positions of envoy to France, secretary of state, and chief justice of the United States, all of which he declined.

**The South—  
Patrick Henry**

Patrick Henry is known mainly as an orator; and his

fame rests largely on the traditions of two speeches. The first of these was delivered in 1765, when, a young and unknown backwoods lawyer, he succeeded in stampeding the House of Burgesses in favor of outspoken resolutions denouncing the Stamp Act. Of this address the only important part that has come down to us is the single interrupted sentence: "Cæsar had his Brutus; Charles the First had his Cromwell; and George the Third—may profit by their example." The second famous oration was pronounced ten years later before the convention called when the governor had dismissed the Assembly, and the old colonial government was at an end. A report of this speech is given in Wirt's "Life of Patrick Henry," which, though it cannot be traced to its origin, has been generally accepted by tradition, and is perhaps better known than any other passage of American oratory. The section most frequently quoted is that beginning, "Mr. President, it is natural to indulge in the illusions of hope," and ending with the words, "Give me Liberty, or give me Death." Other speeches, the language of which is better authenticated, show a vigorous style well suited to oral delivery. They are not, however, remarkable productions in any way. Patrick Henry, like many other orators, must have derived his power mainly from his personality, and not from his literary style, or even from the logical quality of his argument.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the greatest of the Virginia statesmen except Washington, began his literary career a little later than Henry. He was not admitted to the bar until 1767, and his entrance into politics was in 1769, when he became a member of the House of Burgesses. His first important contribution to revolutionary literature was made in 1774, when he wrote a draft of instructions to the Virginia delegates in Congress, a work afterward published as *A Sum-*

**Thomas  
Jefferson**

*mary View of the Rights of British America.* The next year he filled a vacancy in the Continental congress, and was re-elected to the second congress. Though his writings were few, his ability was recognized, and he was chosen chairman of the committee to draft the "Declaration of Independence." After the "Declaration" was adopted he withdrew from national affairs, and devoted himself to those of his own colony. He revised much of the legislative code of Virginia, and while governor wrote many letters and state papers of interest. Later, in answer to inquiries from the French government, he prepared his *Notes on Virginia*. This is an account of the physical and industrial condition of the state, with some comments on social and political matters. It was first printed privately in France, but was afterward widely circulated. From 1784 to 1789 Jefferson was in France. His later writings, including many letters and state papers, and the *Autobiography*, are of the greatest value to the student of history, but show no characteristics not found in the earlier work.

The best known production of Jefferson is of course the "Declaration of Independence," and in this are seen the chief characteristics of all his better writings. He was by nature a theorist, or, as it was the fashion to say in his time, a philosopher; and he had a way of stating general principles with the dignity and sounding force that is fitting to the utterance of great truth. He was also a close observer and a man of wide interests, given to the collection of facts, and on occasion to their arrangement and presentation in an effective manner. These two characteristics are shown respectively in the opening paragraphs of the "Declaration," and in the specific accusations against the king that follow. The charge sometimes brought against the "Declaration," and no doubt applicable to some of Jefferson's writings, is

**The Declaration  
of Independence**

that the connection between facts and generalizations is neither as close nor as logical as it should be. The "Declaration," however, expressed the ideas not of Jefferson as an individual, but of the American people as he and the other members of the committee understood them. It is unfair, therefore, to hold him too closely responsible for anything but the style; and this, though it has been sneered at as "sophomoric," showed by the immediate effect of the document, and by its hold on the people for over a century, that it was well adapted for its purpose.

Daniel Dulany (1721-1797), a prominent lawyer of Maryland, published at the time of the Stamp Act agitation a pamphlet entitled *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes on the British Colonies*. This is one of the calmest, clearest, and most effective of the many arguments against taxation without representation. Its fame in later years was perhaps the less because the author advocated only peaceable means of resistance, and consistently refused to join in the war for independence. James Madison (1751-1836), of Virginia, a classmate of Freneau and Brackenridge, and another contributor to the *Federalist*, did his most important writing in connection with the framing and adoption of the constitution, though his career as a statesman extended well into the nineteenth century. His literary taste was surer than Jefferson's, but his writings lack some of the elements of popularity.

In the work of moulding public opinion and stimulating popular enthusiasm political orations and pamphlets were aided by writings in forms more commonly spoken of as "literary." Prose essays, fiction, and the drama were all used to express opinions on questions of vital contemporary interest. Some of the prose and much of the political verse of the time may be classed as satire, using this term in the broad sense which

Lesser  
Southern  
Controversialists

Forms of Political Literature



includes downright abuse as well as more delicate and cutting attacks. Ballads commemorating important events were sometimes satirical, sometimes laudatory. Songs of all kinds were common. All these productions followed the fashions recently prevalent in England. A favorite prose form was the Addisonian essay. Verse satire was written in the heroic couplet of Pope, or in the tetrameter of Butler and Churchill. Ballads were of a few conventional types. Songs were usually written to some popular tune, and were often little more than parodies and adaptations of older originals. Among the most popular of these models was the English song "Hearts of Oak." The tune which became known as "Yankee Doodle" was supplied with many sets of words.

The best of these writings on the patriot side are the work of men who are known for other things, and who will be discussed later in this chapter. Many songs and ballads were anonymous, but with the exception of the different versions of "Yankee Doodle" few of these survived. John Dickinson composed a "Liberty Song" in the same earnest but uninspired manner in which he wrote his pamphlets.

#### Songs and Ballads

Come join hand in hand, brave Americans all,  
And rouse your bold hearts at fair Liberty's call;  
No tyrannous acts, shall suppress your just claim,  
Nor stain with dishonor America's name.  
In freedom we're born, and in freedom we'll live;  
Our purses are ready,  
Steady, Friends, steady,  
Not as *slaves*, but as *freemen* our money we'll give.

Our worthy forefathers—let's give them a cheer—  
To climates unknown did courageously steer;  
Thro' oceans to deserts, for freedom they came,  
And, dying, bequeath'd us their freedom and fame.

Slightly less wooden is the "Pennsylvania Song," which appeared anonymously about 1775.

We are the troop that ne'er will stoop  
 To wretched slavery,  
 Nor shall our seed, by our base deed,  
 Despisèd vassals be ;  
 Freedom we will bequeathe to them,  
 Or we will bravely die ;  
 Our greatest foe, ere long shall know,  
 How much did Sandwich lie.  
 And all the world shall know,  
 Americans are free ;  
 Nor slaves nor cowards we will prove,  
 Great Britain soon shall see.

Of the anonymous ballads the best is "Nathan Hale," or "Hale in the Bush," which has a genuine poetic quality. It begins,

The breezes went steadily thro' the tall pines,  
 A saying "oh ! hu-ush !" a saying "oh ! hu-ush !"  
 As stilly stole by a bold legion of horse,  
 For Hale in the bush, for Hale in the bush,

and concludes :

The faith of a martyr, the tragedy shew'd,  
 As he trod the last stage, as he trod the last stage.  
 And Britons will shudder at gallant Hale's blood,  
 As his words do presage, as his words do presage.  
 Thou pale king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,  
 Go frighten the slave, go frighten the slave ;  
 Tell tyrants, to you, their allegiance they owe.  
 No fears for the brave, no fears for the brave.

The Tory writings have been less carefully preserved, and the identity of the authors was in many cases never revealed.

The two best known loyalist writers of verse were Jonathan Odell and Joseph Stansbury, whose fame is due to the fact that their names are associated with their writings, rather than to any superiority of their work. Odell (1737-1818) was an Episcopalian clergyman, a native of New Jersey, of old New England Puritan stock. He is known chiefly as the

**Jonathan Odell  
 and Joseph  
 Stansbury**

author of four satirical poems published in 1779, of which "The American Times" is the most representative. These are the sort of bitter satire that consists largely of vituperation of measures and men:

Virginian caitiff! Jefferson by name;  
Perhaps from Jeffries sprung of rotten fame.  
His savage letter all belief exceeds,  
And Congress glories in his brutal deeds.

Joseph Stansbury (1750-1809), a Philadelphia crockery merchant, born in London and educated at Saint Paul's school, was a man of much cleverness and good nature. Most of his poems are lyrics; while they are intense in their devotion to the king they lack the bitterness of Odell's, and sometimes have even an element of playfulness.

## II. GENERAL LITERATURE

Purely political writings, numerous though they were, did not constitute all of the literary work done between 1765 and 1800. Just before the outbreak of violent discussion there had become noticeable in various parts of the country an increased interest in literature. Men of literary tastes, many of them young scribblers in or just out of college, tried their hands at the lighter forms of writing then current in England, and occasionally at more ambitious productions. During the war these men naturally gave their attention to questions of the day, and confined themselves largely to political satires and allegories, martial odes, and patriotic essays. After peace was restored they turned again to milder and more serious forms of literature. With the sense of political independence came the feeling that America should achieve literary independence as well; and writers throughout the country were seized with a desire to manufacture at once a great American literature. The serious attempts

**Literary At-  
tempts and  
Ambitions**

of these men form, from the viewpoint of to-day, one of the most amusing phenomena in the history of the nation. The feeling seemed to prevail that the first poet to complete an heroic poem in twelve books would be the American Homer, and the first to write an acceptable tragedy the American Shakespeare. The result was a flood of epics and dramas, accompanied by innumerable lesser works of all descriptions.

The most important group or school of writers was a coterie of Connecticut men, mostly graduates of Yale, who came to be known as the "Hartford Wits."

**The Hartford  
Wits**

The leading members of the group were John Trumbull, Timothy Dwight, and Joel Barlow. Associated with these were David Humphreys, Lemuel Hopkins, Richard Alsop, Theodore Dwight, and others of still less importance.

The causes that led to the transfer of literary supremacy from Massachusetts and Harvard college to Connecticut and

**Literary  
Supremacy of  
Connecticut**

Yale were partly accidental, and partly to be traced in religious, political, and economic conditions. Massachusetts men were by both temperament and position more active in religion and politics. Harvard college, though nominally orthodox, was being infected with the liberalism that later led to the Unitarian schism, and already was obliged to defend itself against many persons who regarded its tendencies as dangerous. At the opening of the war Boston was aggressive in resisting England, and in turn suffered more than any other city. It was natural that Boston men should be more bitter in political controversy, and that after the war they should devote themselves to other things than polite letters. Connecticut, on the other hand, was less disturbed by popular movements. The orthodoxy of Yale was unquestioned, even though many of the undergraduates were influenced by French skepticism. The patriotism of the state

was undoubted, yet feeling did not run so high as in the region of actual conflict. The Connecticut valley, already prosperous before the war, was soon after its close one of the richest sections of the country. With this worldly prosperity and this feeling of certainty regarding religious affairs came leisure for polite literature and a disposition to uphold vested rights, and to look with suspicion on all radicalism. The Hartford convention of a later date was the outgrowth of tendencies already in operation.

With the exception of Barlow all the Hartford Wits were conservatives in religion and politics, hating France, and opposing with especial vigor all political measures that tended to shake public credit, or disturb the existing order of things. All of them, too, were disciples of the eighteenth century school of literature, accepting without question Addison as the greatest English master in prose, and Pope in verse.

The eldest and probably the most talented of the Hartford Wits was John Trumbull (1750-1831), a descendant of an old New England family. Remarkable stories are told of Trumbull's precocity, the most notable being that he passed the entrance examinations for Yale college at the age of seven. He actually entered upon his studies in that institution in 1763, took his bachelor's degree in 1767, and his master's degree after three years more of residence as "Dean's scholar." After studying law for a year he was recalled to Yale for two years as tutor. He then went to Boston and read law in the office of John Adams until near the outbreak of hostilities, when he returned to New Haven and took up the practice of his profession. Later he removed to Hartford, where after the war he held various political offices.

Trumbull's literary career began while he was a graduate student at Yale. In 1769-70 he wrote, probably with the

assistance of Timothy Dwight, the *Medler*, a series of essays obviously modeled on the *Spectator*. These deal with literary, social, and even religious questions, but do not touch politics. Later, in 1770, Trumbull's Early Writings he published another series, the *Correspondent*. His commencement piece, spoken on the occasion of taking his second degree, was "An Essay on the Use and Advantages of the Fine Arts," written partly in prose and partly in the heroic couplet. During his tutorship at Yale he continued to write verse, producing several elegies and odes with obvious indebtedness to Gray and Milton. His most important production of this time was, however, *The Progress of Dulness*, a lively satire on modern education in three cantos of Hudibrastic verse. This poem seems to be the literary result of a movement led successfully by some of the younger men at Yale in favor of greater attention to English composition, oratory, and *belles lettres* in that institution.

Before Trumbull entered the law office of John Adams at the age of twenty-three he had, as has been seen, made several attempts at writing in both prose and verse, and had shown considerable proficiency in managing conventional literary forms. In Boston, as might be expected, he was diverted from literary criticism, theories of education, and social foibles to the all-absorbing topic of politics. In 1774 he wrote an "Elegy on the Times," a poem of sixty-three stanzas on the Port Bill and similar subjects. The next year, after he returned to New Haven, he published in Philadelphia the first part of *McFingal*. This satire, the work for which Trumbull is chiefly remembered, is a burlesque in Hudibrastic verse on the Tory sympathizers. *McFingal*, the butt of the poem, is a voluble loyalist of Scotch extraction. This first part of the poem, afterward divided into two cantos, tells of an exciting town meeting, and is largely polemical. The two later cantos,



added in 1782 in response to popular demand, are a trifle broader in their humorous account of the tarring and feathering of *McFingal*, and the secret meeting of his adherents in his cellar. The real work of the satire in influencing popular feeling was done by the first part. The poem is usually said to be modeled on *Hudibras*, though Professor Tyler thinks he finds more influence of the contemporary English satirist Churchill. A work of this kind is little read after the occasion that inspired it has passed into history; but the popularity of *McFingal* in its day was very great, and it was many times reprinted in the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly it was the most successful American political satire before the *Biglow Papers*. To-day it is known only by name and by a few pointed couplets:

But optics sharp it needs, I ween,  
To see what is not to be seen.

No man e'er felt the halter draw,  
With good opinion of the law.

Trumbull took little part in the deliberate efforts put forth by his contemporaries to produce a new national literature. Although he lived until 1831, his writing was almost all done before the close of the war. His only noteworthy publications of later date were political satires produced in collaboration with some of the lesser Hartford Wits. These will be discussed in another place.

Trumbull's friend and collaborator, Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), was graduated from Yale in 1769, taught school for two years, and in 1771 became  
**Timothy Dwight** tutor at Yale at the same time as Trumbull. In 1777 he gave up his tutorship to become chaplain in the army. Afterward he lived at Northampton, where his grandfather, Jonathan Edwards, had lived before him, occupying himself as farmer, preacher, and member of the legislature.

From 1783 to 1795 he was pastor of the church at Greenfield, Connecticut, and from 1795 to his death president of Yale. It should be noted that both as tutor and as president he did much to improve instruction in English and allied branches.

While still an undergraduate but seventeen years of age Dwight was probably associated with Trumbull in the produc-

tion of the *Medler*, and afterward of the *Correspondent*. Even before this he had made some metrical translations that had attracted attention, and a little later, in 1771, began his epic poem, the *Conquest of Canaan*. He tells us that this was finished in three years, but was not published until 1785. It contains, however, several references to events of the Revolutionary war which must have been written later, and there is reason for suspicion that it was revised in other particulars. On the whole it seems more representative of 1785 than of 1774. It is a poem of eleven books in the heroic couplet, and treats of the subject named in the title, with considerable deviation from the Scripture narrative, for the sake of proportion in the story. Some of the verse is effective enough after a mechanical fashion, but the poem as a whole is academic, plodding, and mediocre. The Revolutionary battles and heroes that the author wishes to honor are introduced in extended similes, which ostensibly illuminate something in the narrative.

The preface of the *Conquest of Canaan* is an interesting illustration of the attitude of American writers just after the close of the war. After a fulsome dedication to Washington the author remarks that his epic "is the first of the kind which has been published in this country," makes unabashed reference to the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*, and claims the liberty allowed to other poets of coining new words. In conclusion he says: "As the poem is uniformly friendly to delicacy, and virtue, he hopes his countrymen will so far regard

him with candour, as not to impute it to him as a fault, that he has endeavoured to please them, and has thrown in his mite, for the advancement of the refined arts, on this side of the Atlantic."

Not long after the publication of the *Conquest of Canaan* Dwight began the composition of *Greenfield Hill*, a work which, however, did not appear in print until 1794. This poem, in seven Parts, takes its name from the village of Greenfield where the author was pastor. As originally planned it was to imitate a different English poet in each Part, and although this plan was abandoned, the imitation is still evident in many places. The metres employed are blank verse, the heroic couplet, the Spenserian stanza, and the octo-syllabic couplet. The titles of the different sections are "The Prospect," "The Flourishing Village," "The Burning of Fairfield," "The Destruction of the Pequods," "The Clergyman's Advice to the Villagers," "The Farmer's Advice to the Villagers," and "The Vision." The author avows as his object "To contribute to the innocent amusement of his countrymen, and to their improvement in manners, and in economical, political, and moral sentiments;" and though there is much pleasant description of simple rural life, especially in the earlier parts, the whole poem is painfully didactic. Some passages have value, however, as early examples of nature-appreciation in American poetry.

Dwight was the author of several other works. While a chaplain in the army he wrought out the song "Columbia," the first stanza of which runs:

Columbia, Columbia, to glory rise,  
The queen of the world, and child of the skies!  
Thy genius commands thee; with raptures behold,  
While ages on ages thy splendours unfold.  
Thy reign is the last, and the noblest of time,  
Most fruitful thy soil, most inviting thy clime.  
Let the crimes of the east ne'er encrimson thy name,  
Be freedom, and science, and virtue, thy fame.

Perhaps his most poetic bit of verse is the well-known paraphrase of the one hundred and thirty-eighth Psalm, beginning:

I love thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of thine abode.

Less important writings of a later time were a verse satire, "The Triumph of Infidelity," some observations on "Language," and an "Essay on Light." The year after Dwight's death one hundred and twenty-three of his sermons were collected and printed under the title of *Theology explained and defended*.

#### **Dwight's Later Works**

In 1821 was issued his chief prose work, the *Travels*. These were based on a series of systematic vacation journeys in the course of which President Dwight traversed the greater part of New England and much of New York. They are in the form of letters addressed to an imaginary English gentleman, but were intended for American readers. They give many interesting and valuable facts regarding the localities visited by the author, and abound in all sorts of miscellaneous observations. Their chief value is to the student of American social history.

In many ways Timothy Dwight, though he had rather less of genius than either Trumbull or Barlow, was the most representative of the Hartford Wits. Unlike Trumbull, he continued writing throughout his life. The period before political discussion became all-absorbing is represented by his contributions to the *Medler* and the *Correspondent*; the years of the war by "Columbia;" the later period of literary striving by the *Conquest of Canaan* and *Greenfield Hill*. The author's limitations are also significant. The attempting of an epic, the deliberate imitation of English authors in a poem intended to be national, like *Greenfield Hill*, the fondness for formal, sounding passages of rhetorical verse, and the plodding, con-

#### **Dwight's Literary Importance**

scientious, but uninspired, quality of all his work are characteristic of the school to which he belonged.

Joel Barlow (1754-1812), the third of the best-known trio of Hartford Wits, was the most typical Yankee of them all. He took his bachelor's degree at Yale

**Joel Barlow** in 1778, and remained at the college for a time as graduate student. He seems to have hoped for a tutorship, but was disappointed, and turned to the study of law. Hearing that the troops were in need of chaplains, he took a six weeks' course in divinity, was licensed to preach, and ministered for some time to the army in New York. After this he kept a printing office, edited a country paper, and revised the translation of *Watts's Psalms*. Later he went to England, where he acted, no doubt innocently, as the agent of a swindling land company. From here he drifted to France, was made a Citizen, and served the French government in various ways. In 1805 he returned to America; in 1811 he was appointed minister to France, and the next year he lost his life in Poland while endeavouring to join Napoleon during the retreat from Moscow.

Barlow differed from most of his Connecticut contemporaries in being less conservative in politics and religion.

**Barlow's Liberal Tendencies** Consistency was not one of his chief virtues, and it is impossible to say from what he wrote and did exactly what he believed. After his experiences in France his orthodox countrymen thought little good of him, and the Congregational church of Connecticut replaced his edition of the Psalms by a sounder, if less poetical, version by Dr. Dwight. Reputable historians have also accused him of treasonable designs against his country. On the other hand, his admirers claim that he has been libelled and misunderstood. At all events he was inclined to be a liberal, and his liberal tendencies showed themselves in his writings.

Barlow's literary aspirations seem to have been in the direction of verse rather than of prose. On the occasion of his graduation he read a poem on "The Prospect of Peace;" and soon afterward he began a narrative and philosophical poem which occupied his spare time during his chaplainship, and was published in 1787 as the *Vision of Columbus*. After leaving the army he contributed to the *Anarchiad*, a political satire which will be mentioned later, and turned out a number of miscellaneous trifles. While abroad he wrote in prose on political subjects, his most important work being *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, published in 1792 and 1795. He also wrote a verse satire, "The Conspiracy of Kings." It was in 1793, during his sojourn in France, that he produced his mock heroic poem "Hasty Pudding." In parody of the many poems inscribed in sounding phrases to the Father of his Country the author dedicated this effusion to Mrs. Washington. The work has life, and movement, and real wit. In one or two places the humor, while not coarse, is not exactly refined, and unfortunately these are the passages most frequently quoted.

Barlow seems never to have given up the idea of writing the great American poem, and in 1807 he published the *Columbiad*. This is really the *Vision of Columbus* enlarged from nine to ten books, and altered in many respects, mostly for the worse. As in the earlier poem, Columbus in prison is visited by Hesper, the genius of the western world, who enables him to behold in detail the course of events in America to the time the poem was written, and in a more general way the greatness of the country thereafter. The verse is accompanied by pedantic and dogmatical prose notes, in which the author assumes to instruct the reader on all sorts of divergent subjects. Strangely enough, Barlow, always fond of rhetorical



effect, became more bombastic as he grew older. Thus, in the *Vision of Columbus*, he wrote:

The Hero turn'd. And tow'rd the crowded coast  
Rose on the wave a wide-extended host,  
They shade the main and spread their sails abroad,  
From the wide Laurence to the Georgian flood,  
Point their black batteries to the approaching shore,  
And bursting flames begin the hideous roar.

Twenty years later in the *Columbiad* these six lines were expanded into twenty-eight, part of which run:

Columbus turn'd; when rolling to the shore  
Swells o'er the seas an undulating roar;  
Slow, dark, portentous, as the meteors sweep  
And curtain black the illimitable deep,  
High stalks, from surge to surge, a demon Form  
That howls thro' heaven and breathes a billowing storm.  
His head is hung with clouds; his giant hand  
Flings a blue flame far flickering to the land;  
His blood-stain'd limbs drip carnage as he strides  
And taint with gory grume the staggering tides;  
Like two red suns his quivering eyeballs glare,  
His mouth disgorges all the stores of war,  
Pikes, muskets, mortars, guns and globes of fire  
And lighted bombs that fusing trails expire.

This is Barlow at his worst. Many passages of the *Columbiad* are in good imitative verse, and show a vigor and fire unknown to the author's contemporary, Dwight. But the length of the poem, its ambitious title and plan, its bombast, and the author's pedantic notes have made it the stock example of the works produced in an attempt to manufacture a national literature.

The other Hartford Wits were less important, and show much the same characteristics as Trumbull and Dwight.

**Lesser Hartford Wits—David Humphreys** David Humphreys (1752-1818) was a graduate of Yale, an aid-de-camp of Washington in the war, and afterward secretary of legation at Paris. On his return he introduced merino sheep into America, an act for which he perhaps de-

serves more credit than for his literary achievements. During the war he wrote a metrical "Address to the Armies of the United States" which was widely reprinted and translated into French. A longer *Poem on the Happiness of America* also gained great currency. The *Widow of Malabar*, a tragedy adapted from the French, was acted at Philadelphia in 1790. Besides these works Humphreys wrote a *Life of General Putnam*, and minor songs and poems.

Lemuel Hopkins (1750-1801), a Hartford physician, Theodore Dwight (1764-1846), a cousin of Timothy Dwight and a Hartford and New York lawyer, and Richard Alsop (1761-1815), who seems to have had no occupation but scribbling, were members of the same literary set. These men were given to collaboration—a practice more common among authors of the eighteenth century than now. In 1786-7 Trumbull, Barlow, Hopkins, and Humphreys contributed to

**The Anarchiad** the "New Haven Gazette" *American Antiquities*, better known as the *Anarchiad*. This series of papers illustrates the elaborate and ingenious manner then employed by the satirist. The first number reports the finding in some prehistoric ruins to the westward of "The Anarchiad, a Poem on the restoration of Chaos and substantial Night, in twenty-four books." This epic is conjectured to be the oldest in the world, and Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Pope are said to have known and imitated it. This device made it possible to give parodies of these authors as extracts from the imaginary manuscript. The following is typical:

Lo, the poor Briton, who, corrupted, sold,  
Sees God in courts, or hears him chink in gold.

A heaven like London his fond fancy makes  
Of Nectar'd porter and ambrosial steaks.  
Not so, Columbia, shall thy sons be known,  
To prize the public weal above their own.

The satire is directed against the Democrats, and especially against the leaders in Shays's rebellion and the advocates of paper money. The title has reference to the reign of anarchy which all Connecticut Federalists believed would follow the triumph of the liberal party.

Another satire of slightly later date was the *Echo*, begun in the "American Mercury" in 1791. Hopkins seems to have

**The Echo** been the leading spirit in this, and among his fellow-workers were Theodore Dwight, Alsop, and probably Trumbull. It was started with the idea of ridiculing false literary taste, but soon became largely political and attacked Democratic measures and the prevalent enthusiasm for French ideas. It consists of poems in the heroic couplet burlesquing current writings of all sorts, such as bombastic newspaper reports, political speeches, and state papers. The same authors wrote many other diatribes in similar vein, particularly New Year's verses summarizing the political events of a year. For some reason not easily explained from the quality of the work, the most famous of these is the "Political Greenhouse" for 1798, a strong satire in Hudibrastic verse. The greater part of the *Echo* and some of the miscellaneous poems were collected into a volume in 1807. This volume shows the unfortunate, but marked, deterioration in the tone of political satire which was taking place about the close of the century. The attacks on opponents are personal and scurrilous. There is little wit, and that little is often coarse. Similar characteristics will be noticed in the work of Carey and other contemporary satirists of the middle states.

It is hard for a reader of to-day to treat the Hartford Wits as seriously as they deserve. Their desire to increase the interest in literature and to stimulate literary production in the new country was a laudable one; but their attempt was so ambitious and so deliberate that it could not have im-

mediate success. Moreover, the fact that they were conservatives in taste as well as in principles led them to adopt literary forms that were already becoming outworn. It is owing rather to the manner than to the quality of their work that to-day there is little interest in any of their writings. In their generation their essays and verses were really enjoyed by many of their countrymen; and English reviews by no means friendly to America gave much higher praise to the *Columbiad* and the *Conquest of Canaan* than the most patriotic American would think of giving now. It is not likely, if ever the pendulum of literary taste swings back, and the despised eighteenth century literature is again admired, that these imitative American attempts will regain their interest. But a careful study of the intellectual history of America shows that, though their manner was not followed, they had more influence on the development of a national literature than is often supposed.

**Significance of  
the Hartford  
Wits**

While the Hartford Wits were busily at work, literary production in Boston was meagre and unimportant. Massachusetts had suffered much from the war, and commercial prosperity returned slowly. Moreover, changes in religious belief and social conditions were absorbing the energies of thinking men. For these or other reasons few Massachusetts authors wrote anything worthy remembrance in the years immediately after the war; and of these few the majority were women.

**Massachusetts  
Writers**

Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814), sister of James Otis and wife of James Warren, another political leader, was prolific of both prose and verse. Her "Adulator" (1773) and "The Group" (1775) are dramatic sketches in which contemporary characters figure under fictitious names. Mrs. Warren had no touch of humor, and these dramatic satires, if they may be so

**Mercy Otis  
Warren**

characterized, are very heavy and very severe. Her tragedies, the "Sack of Rome" and the "Ladies of Castile," also teach political lessons. Besides her satiric and dramatic works she wrote a history of the Revolution "interspersed with biographical, political, and moral observations," published in 1805. Her relationship to two leading families and her acquaintance with the most prominent men of the country make her work of much interest and considerable value. She had an extensive correspondence with many of the best known men and women of her time, and her letters are models of dull, formal propriety. Over the signature "Philomela" she addressed Mrs. Winthrop as "Honorina" and Mrs. Adams as "Portia." Among her contemporaries she was noted for her ability to draw "characters," especially of persons whom she disliked. These sharp and unsympathetic portrayals often made her unpopular, and her characterization of John Adams in her history led to a wordy controversy with that irascible statesman that is now perhaps better known than any of her other works.

Phillis Wheatley, a slave girl born in Africa about the middle of the eighteenth century, brought to America in her childhood, and educated by Mr. Wheatley of Boston, wrote a considerable number of verses. They are good conventional work in the forms then popular, devoid of originality, but really remarkable considering the history of the author. That they have been remembered is partly due, however, to the fact that in the days of the abolitionists they were often cited to prove the intellectual capability of the negro.

Susanna Haswell Rowson (1762-1824) should perhaps be mentioned here, though her most popular book was written in England, and several of her writings bear later date than 1800. She was the daughter of a British naval officer who served in America and married a Boston woman. At the outbreak of the

**Susanna Haswell Rowson**

war Susanna, a child of fourteen years, went to England with her parents, where she afterward became governess in a noble family, was married, and began her career as an author. Her first novel, *Victoria*, appeared in 1786. "The characters are taken from real life, and the design of the work is 'to improve the morals of the female sex by impressing them with a just sense of the merits of filial piety.'" The same description might with slight change be applied to most of Mrs. Rowson's works. *Charlotte Temple*, the only one now remembered, was published in London in 1790. Three years later Mrs. Rowson came to America, where she first went on the stage, and then conducted for twenty-five years a fashionable school for girls in and near Boston. During her theatrical experience she wrote an opera, a farce, and some other works, and later published poems, essays, and stories, all sentimentally didactic. The novel *Sarah, the Exemplary Wife*, with the motto "Do not marry a fool," is said to be based on her own matrimonial experience.

Another Boston writer of some note in his day was Robert Treat Paine, Jr. (1773-1811), son of the signer of the Declaration. He was christened Thomas, but secured a legal change of name because of the odium that attached in New England to the greater Thomas Paine. After taking a degree at Harvard he entered business, but gave much of his time to writing. In 1794 he established the "Federal Orrery," in which he published the "Jacobiniad" and the "Lyars," political satires that made him many enemies. When at last Puritan Massachusetts permitted stage plays he wrote a prize prologue for the opening of the first theatre in Boston. After his newspaper venture failed he became more closely connected with theatrical matters, and married an actress. For a time he studied and attempted to practice law, but his naturally indolent disposition and increasing habits of dissipation prevented suc-

Robert Treat  
Paine, Jr.



cess, and he died in extreme poverty. This wretched close of his career was ascribed by the more Puritanical residents of Boston to his connection with the theatre, and his life was often cited to point a moral. His poetical works include many occasional poems, all in the heroic couplet, among them the prologue already referred to and "The Ruling Passion," delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard. He also wrote a number of rather bombastic patriotic songs, of which "Adams and Liberty" was the most famous.

Among the minor Massachusetts writers was Mrs. Hannah Adams (1755-1832), author of a *Dictionary of Religions*, a

**Minor Massa-**  
**chusetts Writers** *History of the Jews*, a *History of New England*, and several other works. All these were long considered excellent reading for the young, and may still be found in old libraries. Hannah W. Foster (1759-1840), born in Boston and after her marriage a resident of Brighton, Massachusetts, also wrote moral books for young ladies. Her most popular story, *The Coquette, or the History of Eliza Wharton*, was published in the last years of the eighteenth century, and reprinted many times afterward. Dr. Benjamin Church, a Boston physician of considerable culture and ability, wrote a number of miscellaneous poems, including patriotic songs, and a long verse satire, "The Times," dealing principally with the Stamp Act. He was accused, however, of being a loyalist in disguise, and of writing Tory parodies on his own poems. Early in 1776, after being imprisoned for some time, he was forced to leave the country, and the ship on which he took passage was lost at sea.

In the other New England states literary production was as slight as in Massachusetts. Royall Tyler (1757-1826), a native of Boston, a Harvard graduate, and for a time a student in the law office of John Adams, removed to Vermont, where he finally became chief justice. He is remembered for

his comedies, *The Contrast*, and *May-Day or New York in an Uproar*. The former, said to be the first play in which the

**Other New  
England States  
—Royall Tyler**

Yankee dialect was introduced for purposes of comedy, was played in New York in 1786. Tyler also contributed to the "Portfolio" and other magazines, and wrote *The Algerine Captive*, a story of piracy and adventure in the form of memoirs interspersed with many expressions of opinion on political and social topics.

To Colonel Robert Rogers (1727-1800?), a native of New Hampshire, and a soldier of wavering allegiance in both the

**Robert Rogers**

French and Indian and the Revolutionary wars, is ascribed the tragedy of *Ponteach, or The Savages of America*. The play represents the Indians as simple and trustworthy people, victimized by white soldiers, traders, hunters, and even missionaries until revolt was a virtue. This is a somewhat unusual view for a soldier like Rogers who had seen much of frontier life; and there is a possibility that he may not have written the play.

Jonathan M. Sewall (1748-1808), a native of Salem and a graduate of Harvard, lived most of his life in New

**Minor New  
England Writers**

Hampshire. His poems, published in 1801, but most of them written much earlier, include metrical versions of nearly the whole of Ossian, some bombastic patriotic songs, and many miscellaneous lyrics. Some of the latter have smoothness and life, and those of a lighter nature are often cleverly turned. Dr. Joseph Brown Ladd (1764-1786) was born and educated in Rhode Island, though most of his poems were not published until the last two years of his life, when his residence was in Charleston, South Carolina. He was a precocious boy, who seems to have accomplished wonders in self-education. His *Poems of Arouet*, published in the year of his death, are formal poetical epistles to his lady-love Amanda, written

while he was studying medicine in Rhode Island. His *Literary Remains*, brought out by his sister in 1832, include paraphrases of Ossian, and of parts of the Bible, patriotic and miscellaneous poems, and critical and scientific essays in prose. His verse, though juvenile, shows some individuality and promise, and his early death in a duel at the age of twenty-two may have prevented really noteworthy work.

New York, which in the next century was to become the literary center of the country, was before 1800 a provincial, commercial town, paying little attention to literature. The theatre was permitted earlier than in Boston, and for this reason there were a few attempts at play-writing, most of them unworthy of mention. William Dunlap (1766-1839), artist and author, whose biographical and critical works belong to the nineteenth century, was for some years manager of a New York theatre, and wrote and adapted many plays. Among the most important of his original productions were *The Father*, a comedy played in 1789, *Leicester*, a tragedy written in 1790 and played in 1794, and *Andre*, an historical drama played in 1798. The adaptations were from various sources, but beginning with the *Stranger* in 1798 the greater number were from Kotzebue and other authors of the sentimental school. Dunlap was a manager seeking to meet the popular demand, and his plays doubtless seemed better to the audiences who saw them than they do to the reader now. He has an important place in the history of the American stage, and his fame has been appropriately revived by the "Dunlap Society," which printed a number of works on the national drama.

Philip Freneau (1752-1832) was born in New York city, but he should be associated with New Jersey, where he spent much of his life. He was graduated from Princeton in 1771. Even as an undergraduate he did much writing, and collaborated with his classmate, H. H. Brackenbridge, in a poem,

"The Rising Glory of America," spoken by the latter at commencement. He wrote his first political satires early in 1775, and later in the same year sailed to the West Indies. During the voyage the mate died, and Freneau, though apparently without experience as a sailor, took his place. At this time he seems to have acquired his love of the sea. He returned to America in 1778, and thereafter was alternately at sea and engaged in writing and editorial work ashore. His most notable voyage was one undertaken in 1780, which ended in his capture by the British and his confinement in a prison ship in New York harbor. His experience during this imprisonment was the basis for one of his most scathing poems. The most important of his editorial experiences was in connection with the "National Gazette," which he founded in Philadelphia in 1791. At this time he held a very minor clerkship in the department of state. As his paper was strongly anti-Federalist and pro-French, the charge was made that Jefferson, then secretary of state, was subsidizing the editor with government money. A scandal arose which seems ridiculous now, but which resulted in the abandonment of the "Gazette."

Freneau was a prolific writer. He issued volumes of verse in 1786, 1788, 1795, 1809, and 1815, and these contain by no means all his poems. Most of these volumes are rare, and for many years the only collection of his works readily available was

**Freneau's  
Poems**

*Poems relating to the American Revolution*, edited by Evert A. Duyckinck in 1865. It was probably for this reason that Freneau came to be known chiefly for his political poems—work which is neither his best nor his most distinctive. Unfortunately his latest editor, Professor F. H. Pattee, has accepted and helped to perpetuate the designation "Poet of the American Revolution."

The political poems of Freneau were mostly written in the

year 1775, before the trip to Jamaica, and in the few years immediately following the return from this trip in 1778,

**Political Satires** though a considerable number were produced later, especially during the war of 1812. They are classed as satires, though most of them are downright attacks on measures and men, with no touch of lightness or humor. The following lines on Cornwallis are typical:

What pen can write, what human tongue can tell  
The endless murders of this man of hell!  
Nature in him disgrac'd the form divine;  
Nature mistook, she meant him for a—swine:  
That eye his forehead to her shame adorns;  
Blush! nature, blush—bestow him tail and horns!—

Convinc'd we are, no foreign spot on earth  
But Britain only, gave this reptile birth,  
That white-cliff'd isle, the vengeful dragon's den,  
Has sent us monsters where we look'd for men.

Strange as it may seem, the man who wrote great quantities of verse like this was possessed of a vivid and powerful imagination, a lightness and delicacy of poetic fancy, and even a considerable faculty of humor. These contradictions in the character of his poetic work are hard to explain. His latest editor endeavours to trace a change in temper, with disillusionment and loss of the romantic spirit, but the dates of his poems hardly support this theory. Many of the lightest and most delicately imaginative verses were contemporaneous with, or follow, the most bitter political writings. The man seems really to have possessed two natures. The bitterness of the satires is clearly genuine, and the fineness and delicacy of the lighter work is just as clearly an expression of real feeling.

Freneau's earliest attempts include a considerable amount of light and humorous verse, with some satire, but no more than is to be expected of the average collegian. Even as an

**Imaginative  
Poems**

undergraduate he was responding to the influence of Gray, and of Milton's minor poems. He also showed at an early age the peculiar sense of the personality of natural objects that characterizes some of his best poems. Perhaps the most important of his early works is "Pictures of Columbus," said to have been written in 1774. This consists of eighteen sections, each portraying a scene in the life of the hero. Several of these are in blank verse—a form which Freneau mastered rather late. The passages in lyric measures are more striking. In the interview between Columbus and an enchantress is shown rather crudely some of the weird imagination which distinguished several of his earlier poems:

**Freneau's  
Early Poems**

The staring owl her note has sung;  
With gaping snakes my cave is hung;  
Of maiden hair my bed is made,  
Two winding sheets above it laid.

During his stay in Jamaica Freneau wrote several poems, the most strikingly imaginative of which is the "House of Night." The theme is the death of Death. Freneau's poem is very uneven, and taken as a whole it is in no way to be compared to the work of Swinburne and Poe, who have treated the same idea; but some stanzas have real power:

Rude, from the wide extended Chesapeake  
I heard the winds the dashing waves assail,  
And saw from far, by picturing fancy form'd,  
The black ship travelling through the noisy gale.

Less restrained, but not without a certain energy and vividness are passages like the following:

Nor look'd I back, till to a far off wood,  
Trembling with fear, my weary feet had sped—  
Dark was the night, but at the enchanted dome  
I saw the infernal windows flaming red.



And from within the howls of Death I heard,  
 Cursing the dismal night that gave him birth,  
 Damning his ancient sire, and mother sin,  
 Who at the gates of hell, accursed, brought him forth.

Dim burnt the lamp, and now the phantom Death  
 Gave his last groans in horror and despair—  
 "All hell demands me hence,"—he said, and threw  
 The red lamp hissing through the midnight air.

Even more significant than the over-wrought imagination of "The House of Night" is the author's delicate and sympathetic treatment of nature. Some of the poems, such as "The Dying Elm," and "On the Sleep of Plants," ascribe to natural objects a personality, a sort of kinship with man, such as no other American poet of the eighteenth century dreamed of. "The Wild Honeysuckle," which often represents Freneau in the anthologies, is excellent in form, but more conventional in idea. Several poems to insects and animals, such as "To a Caty-did," "To a Dog," "On a Honey Bee Drinking from a Glass of Wine and Drowned therein," show a genial, half-humorous tendency which is strange in the author of the political satires. The Indians and the fate which overtook them are also touched upon in more than one poem. "The Indian Burying Ground" well deserves to be remembered independently of the fact that Campbell borrowed without credit the last line of the stanza:

By midnight moons, o'er moistening dews;  
 In habit for the chase arrayed,  
 The hunter still the deer pursues,  
 The hunter and the deer, a shade!

The reawakening of interest in Freneau's non-political verse not many years ago led to absurd over-praise. The assertion was sometimes made that he was an important precursor of the romantic movement, anticipating in many ways Words-

worth and Coleridge. The most that can safely be said is that he was strongly influenced by the same poets who influenced the earlier romanticists in England, and that in comparison with his contemporaries he showed more originality and independence of thought, more imagination, and a finer feeling for nature. His exact relations to romanticism are, however, worthy of more careful study than they have received. "The House of Night" was written after *Vathek* and the poems of "Ossian," but before the writings of Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, Godwin, and Blake. A search for the sources of the weird imagery in this poem, and a comparison between Freneau's attitude toward nature and that of his English contemporaries might yield some interesting results, though it would not show him to be the leader in the new movement. With all his defects, Freneau seems sure of a place in the history of American literature. He is the most important American poet before Bryant, and he is one of the very few writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries whose work deserves attention for its intrinsic merits alone.

To New Jersey may also be credited John Woolman (1720-1772), the Quaker, an intense mystic who, guided by the Inner Light, travelled much among his sect in America and England, and left a *Journal* in which he recorded his experiences. The gentleness and simplicity of this short autobiography endear it to readers who can appreciate devout and wholly impractical idealism. It won high praise from Charles Lamb, and it was edited by Whittier, who was drawn to the author both as a brother Quaker and as an opponent of slavery.

Among the signers of the *Declaration* from New Jersey was Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791), one of the cleverest of the light writers of the Revolutionary time. He was born in Philadelphia, was educated at the college of Philadelphia,

afterward the University of Pennsylvania, and studied law. His activities, however, were never confined to his profession.

**Francis  
Hopkinson** He was prominent in many civic societies, served for a time as secretary and librarian of the Library Company of Philadelphia, and spent a season abroad. In 1768 he married Miss Borden, of Bordentown, New Jersey, and removed to that place, but again took up his residence in Pennsylvania before the close of the war. In both states he held various political positions, and at the time of his death was United States district judge for Pennsylvania.

Hopkinson was a versatile writer of both prose and poetry. His prose essays in his collected works bear such varied titles as "An Improved Plan of Education," "A new Game of Cards for the Improvement of Orthography," "Speech of a Post in the Assembly-Room," "Improved Method of Quilling a Harpsichord," "Dialogues of the Dead," "Address to the Philosophical Society." He was especially happy as a satirist, and his political burlesques, "A Pretty Story" on the troubles with Great Britain, and "The New Roof," on the proposed constitution, are still remembered. Even better conceived are some of his satires on less important themes, such as his parody on a college examination. The best of his verses are a few graceful little songs which he wrote and set to music; but the best known is the "Battle of the Kegs," a ballad on the alarm caused among the British by infernal machines floated down the river into Philadelphia. Hopkinson was a somewhat rare example, in the stirring Revolutionary times, of the accomplished gentleman who combined with excellence in his profession an easy proficiency in the arts of music, drawing, versifying, and essay-making.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816) was born in Scotland, but came to Pennsylvania as a boy. He was graduated at Princeton in the same class with Freneau, and served for

a time as tutor in the college. Later he taught school, edited the "United States Magazine," studied divinity, and was an army chaplain. After the close of the war he

**Hugh Henry  
Brackenridge**

studied law and removed to Pittsburg, where he had some connection with the Whiskey

Insurrection of 1794. From 1799 until his death he occupied a seat on the supreme bench of Pennsylvania. Like Hopkinson, he scribbled for recreation, though the temper of the men was widely different. The *Gazette Publications*, a volume in which he collected many of his shorter writings, contains a sketch of Pittsburg, burlesque poems on dueling and on political subjects, a "Masque" on the warm springs of Virginia, the verse of which is strongly imitative of "Comus," several sermons, a drama on Bunker Hill, and many miscellaneous trifles of all sorts. His most ambitious work is *Modern Chivalry, or the Adventures of Captain Far-*

**Modern Chivalry**

*rago and Teague O'Regan*. This is a rambling prose burlesque showing the influence of *Don*

*Quixote* in the plan, and of Smollett, Sterne, and Fielding in the manner. The Captain starts out to see the world, accompanied by his servant Teague, who is the butt of the story, and whose misadventures furnish opportunity for the humor and for a great deal of half-hidden satire on democracy. In the first part, published in Pittsburg in 1796, some of the situations are amusing, and the humor, though coarse, is genuine. The second part, published in 1806, has a stronger political bearing, and is less successful.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century Philadelphia was the American city that most attracted cultured immigrants and visitors from abroad. New York

**Cultured Immigrants to  
Philadelphia**

was not yet an important port, and Boston was under a cloud from the effects of the war. The fact that Philadelphia was the

home of Franklin, the American who was best known in

Europe, perhaps aided in attracting attention to the city. Mention has already been made of Thomas Paine, whose writings were almost wholly political. At a little later time several other immigrants were concerned with other forms of literature.

To Pennsylvania, if to America at all, belongs Jean Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, a native of Normandy, who was educated in England and came to America in 1754. During the war he seems to have been neutral, and after a visit to France in 1782-3 he served for a time as French consul at New York. During much of his stay in America he was engaged in farming, and the work by which he is known is entitled *Letters of an American Farmer*. These letters, published in English in 1782, and afterward translated by the author into French, are gossipy, and have a pleasing though somewhat artificial style. They are not, like so many published letters from America, written to attract or deter immigrants, but show the results of an accurate and kindly observation of the natural features and the inhabitants of the New World. In a manner that contrasts charmingly with the formal essays of his contemporaries, Crevecoeur writes on such topics as "What is an American?" "Manners and Customs of Nan-tucket," "On Snakes; and on the Humming Bird."

Peter Markoe (1753-1792?), who was born in the West Indies, educated at Trinity college, Dublin, read law in London, and came to Philadelphia in 1783, should be remembered among the literary immigrants to Pennsylvania. He wrote under the assumed name "A Native of Algiers" a tragedy, *The Patriot Chief*, and a comic opera, *The Reconciliation*, besides miscellaneous poems—all ambitious but rather commonplace work.

Some of the other writers who came to Pennsylvania concerned themselves with politics. William Cobbett (Peter Por-

cupine), the English editor, was in Philadelphia from 1792 to 1800 and wrote in support of the Federalists. Cobbett should hardly be classed as an American author, but he must be mentioned, if not for his own writings, then for what was written about him. It was his habit to attack vigorously and directly everything and everybody that he disliked, and his tirades elicited from indignant Americans many protests which are often in a manner similar to his. He must be held partly responsible for the unfortunate loss of dignity and respectability that is seen in political satire about the close of the century.

One of Cobbett's opponents was Mathew Carey (1760-1839), a vigorous and versatile Irishman who in 1784 found it necessary to leave his native country on account of political troubles. During a former exile he had met Franklin in Paris, and it was probably owing to this fact that he came to Philadelphia. Here as publisher, editor, and book-seller he was a prominent character for over fifty years, his activities ranging all the way from fighting a duel with a rival editor to organizing the first American Sunday School society. In the year of his arrival in America he established the "Pennsylvania Herald," and afterward edited the "American Museum." In 1793 he published a *History of the Yellow Fever*, and in 1796 a small volume called *Miscellaneous Trifles*, containing short stories, Addisonian sketches, papers on the stage, etc. In 1799 appeared his *Plumb Pudding for the Humane, Chaste, Valiant, Enlightened Peter Porcupine*, an attack on Cobbett, whom he hated with the combined hatred of a Democrat for a Federalist and an Irishman for an Englishman. He writes:

But, wretch as you are, accursed by God, and hated by man, the most tremendous scourge that hell ever vomited forth to curse a



people, by sowing discord among them, I desire not the honour or credit of being abused or vilified by you. . . .

To send a challenge to a blasted, posted, loathsome coward, who, a disgrace to the name of soldier, when he was called to account for his villany, hen-heartedly took refuge under the strong arm of the law, and swore his life against the challenger, would sink me almost to a level with yourself. But, detested miscreant, if ever you dare approach the throne of heaven, pour out thanksgivings that I am so far inferior to you in bodily strength. Were I able to grapple with you single-handed, I swear by all my hopes of happiness, the inmost recesses of your dungeon-like labyrinth should not screen you from my vengeance! Heavens! what pride! what pleasure! I should feel in dragging you reeking from your den, and cow-skinning you till Argus himself should not be able to perceive a hair's breadth upon your carcase but sore upon sore; so that were you and Lazarus candidates for the commiseration of the public, you would carry off the palm.

A few weeks after the *Plumb Pudding* he issued the *Porcupiniad*, a Hudibrastic poem in four cantos. In this a relatively small number of verses are made the occasion for voluminous footnotes, containing criticisms on Cobbett, and objectionable passage from his works. Many of Carey's writings after 1800 were on politics and political economy. *The Olive Branch, or Faults on both Sides, Federal and Democratic*, written during the war of 1812, went through several editions.

It would seem that the author of a passage like the one quoted from Carey should be beneath notice in a history of literature. The use of billingsgate in political controversy was, however, a manner of the time. Readers of all classes learned to expect it, and what is worse, to enjoy it; and even writers of more refinement than Carey indulged in it on occasion. Thus William Clifton (1772-1799), a Philadelphian of Quaker descent who wrote some of the most delicate and charming verses of the period, was guilty of the *Group*, a dirty and witless satire on the liberal party. In this coarse attack he ridicules not only the public life of prominent

**Dirty Political  
Satire—William  
Clifton**

Democrats, but their personal appearance and their private misfortunes. This disposition toward scurrility in political writing, which was seen in a slighter degree in the later work of the Hartford Wits, is one of the most unfortunate legacies which the eighteenth century left to the nineteenth.

The last, and except Franklin, the greatest of the Pennsylvania authors who wrote in the period before 1800 was

**Charles Brockden Brown** (1771-1810). He was born in Philadelphia and passed through a somewhat peculiar boyhood, during which poor health interrupted the studies for which he had a taste, and led him to form the habit of taking long solitary rambles in the environs of Philadelphia. He studied law, but never practiced. For some time he was in New York, where he met a number of literary men and did much of his literary work. He early became imbued with religious skepticism, and general freedom of thought, probably from the writings of Godwin. His first published work of importance was *Alcuin*, a discussion of the rights of woman, in dialogue form, which he brought out in 1797. From this time until the close of his short life he wrote unceasingly. His next work, a novel in the form of letters, was never published; but in the four years from 1798 to 1801, inclusive, he gave to the world no less than six novels, *Wieland*, *Ormond*, *Arthur Mervyn*, *Edgar Huntley*, *Clara Howard*, and *Jane Talbot*, besides editing the "Monthly Magazine and American Review" in 1799-1800, and writing fugitive pieces in prose and verse. Between this time and his death he edited the "Literary Magazine and American Register," a monthly, and the "American Register," a semi-annual, published other writings, and worked on a general geography and a history of Rome during the age of the Antonines. He is sometimes spoken of as the first American who "devoted himself to literature as a profession," and the amount and character of the work he did shows what the

phrase meant in his time. His editorial labors and literary hack-work are worth notice only as showing what a man of letters must then do to live. His novels have a greater interest.

In the art of novel-writing, as in political and religious thought, Brown was chiefly influenced by Godwin. His **Brown's Novels** stories all have something of the mysterious, the terrible, or the psychologically strange. In *Wieland* it is spontaneous combustion and ventriloquism; in *Arthur Mervyn* the horrors of yellow fever; in *Edgar Huntley*, somnambulism; and the success of his stories lies largely in the effective though crude way in which he pictures the effect of horror or mystery on the human mind. The presence of this uncanny element is, however, one of the greatest weaknesses of Brown's works to-day. The taste for crude horrors common in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was happily only temporary. The art of handling skillfully the weird and the mysterious was later developed, especially by Poe and Hawthorne, to a point unknown in Brown's time. Moreover, the particular devices that he used were unfortunately chosen. Spontaneous combustion and ventriloquism, in his day terms of vague and terrifying suggestiveness, are now associated respectively with matter-of-fact science and the cheapest charlatanism. It seems absurd to represent the human body as consumed by the former, or a rational being led to commit a series of awful crimes by means of the latter. In the author's time, however, these devices were at least as available for literary uses as are hypnotism and various occult phenomena for the novelists of to-day.

In his scenes and settings Brown was true to his experiences. The action of all his published novels takes place in America, and his descriptions are said to be remarkably faithful. The wild country described in *Edgar Huntley* is like some of the regions visited by Brown in his youthful

rambles. The horrors of the yellow fever epidemic, so vividly portrayed in *Ormond* and *Arthur Mervyn*, were seen by the author in New York. This choice of American settings is but another expression of patriotic self-consciousness; but the realistic handling of scenes chosen shows closeness of observation and an admirable gift for description.

**Scenes of  
Brown's Novels**

In plot, Brown's novels are, according to modern standards, almost formless. The sole unity is often that which belongs to a series of incidents clustering about one person. The action, once begun, continues through a bewildering series of events, each of which is usually told in a long letter or monologue by one of the participants. The interest often lies, not in the grand *dénouement*, but in the outcome of the separate incidents. This interest is, however, rarely lacking. The curiosity aroused by one set of circumstances is never gratified until some new complication has been introduced.

**Plots of  
Brown's Novels**

The six novels, beginning with *Wieland* and closing with *Jane Talbot*, not only stand in time at the turn of the century, but they combine in an interesting way the characteristics of the periods that precede and follow. As pioneer work they will always be interesting to the student of American fiction, and they have enough intrinsic merit to justify the recent revival of interest in the author and his works.

Before 1800 America had made a beginning in scholarship. The Revolutionary period was given rather to the making than the writing of history, and while many works were written which are valuable sources for the later student, few need mention here.

**Scholarship—  
Historians**

The writings of Thomas Hutchinson and of Mercy Warren have already been referred to. Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798), a native of Boston, sometime pastor of the Congregational church at Dover, Massachusetts, and afterward of the Fed-

eral street church, Boston, came nearer than any contemporary to maintaining the traditions of the earlier New England historians. He published an extended *History of New Hampshire*, and in 1794-8 issued two volumes of *American Biographies*. The first volume begins, somewhat remotely, with Biron, Modoc, and Zeno; the second includes several of the early fathers of New England. Belknap should also be remembered as one of the founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society. His instincts were scholarly, and his work, though now superseded, was carefully done. In his humorous prose sketch *The Foresters*, the adventures of John Codline, Walter Carrier, and similar characters represent in allegorical form the early history of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and the other colonies.

Among writings which furnish material to the later historian should be named the *Travels* of Captain Jonathan Carver (1732-1780), published in London in 1778 and later reprinted in America. The author, a native of New York, served in the French and Indian wars, and at their close started to learn something of the new territory that they brought to Great Britain. He penetrated as far as Lake Superior and the headwaters of the Mississippi, and there, receiving no encouragement from the authorities, was forced to return. He then went to England, where he met with slight success in his endeavor to secure recognition of his labors, and where he died. About one third of his book tells in concise manner the story of his journey. The rest is devoted to the manners and customs of the Indians, and the flora and fauna of the regions that he visited. Both the narrative and the descriptions are interesting reading, and more accurate than most books of travel in this age. The war produced many narratives of personal experiences, especially the experiences of persons who were taken prisoners by the British. As a type of these

**Materials for  
History**



may be chosen the account written by the picturesque Vermont fighter and politician, Ethan Allen (1737-1789). The style of this book is rough and ready, and not the least interesting parts are those in which the author gives unconscious and not always flattering portraits of himself. More dignified and in every way better written is the narrative in which Henry Laurens (1724-1792), of South Carolina, merchant, statesman, and afterward commissioner to negotiate peace, tells of his capture and imprisonment in the Tower of London.

One specimen of historical writing stands in a class by itself. Samuel Peters (1735-1826), an Episcopalian clergy-

**Peters's Amusing History** man who was expelled from Connecticut as a loyalist, amused himself during his enforced sojourn in England by writing a *General His-*

*tory of Connecticut, by a Gentleman of the Province.* This work, published in London in 1781, is famous as the authority for the "blue laws," and for many uncomplimentary statements regarding the colony. It is worthless as history and shows the unfairness of the author on every page. A controversy, not yet settled, arose regarding the author and his book, in which it has been maintained that he was prejudiced by the harsh treatment that he received, that he intended a political satire, that he deliberately lied, and that he was insane. Meanwhile the book continues to be amusing, except perhaps to ultra-patriotic and ultra-sensitive citizens of Connecticut.

Natural science received most attention in Philadelphia, where Franklin did some of his most important work after

**Scientists and Other Scholars** 1765. William Bartram (1739-1823) and B. S. Barton (1766-1815), both professors in the

University of Pennsylvania, wrote much on natural history, the former publishing a detailed account of his travels in the South to examine natural products. To Connecticut belongs Noah Webster (1758-1843), who pub-



lished his spelling-book in 1783 and his *Dissertations on the English Language* in 1789. His *Dictionary* belongs to the nineteenth century. Lindley Murray (1745-1826) was a native of Pennsylvania and for some time a resident of New York, though his famous grammar was not written until after his removal to England. Two great theologians and educators, President John Witherspoon (1722-1794) of Princeton, and President Ezra Stiles (1727-1795) of Yale, had an important part in the intellectual development of America, and their writings entitle them at least to mention in a history of American literature.

As the preceding survey has shown, the troubled years of the later eighteenth century brought a change of literary ideals, a sense of literary freedom, and earnest literary striving, but little valuable achievement. The idea that literature should be only the servant of religion passed away, even in New England. In its place there arose, naturally enough, some disposition to connect literature and politics. It was at this time that Americans acquired the habit, often remarked by foreign critics, of discussing so freely questions of government and of law. In political controversy there were developed two prose styles, characteristic of the two political parties, Federalist and Democratic. The one was a sedate, gentlemanly manner, owing something to Addison, and something to later conservative writers in England. The other was a slightly heightened rhetorical style, seen at its best, perhaps, in the "Declaration of Independence." In oratory the prevailing fashion at the close of the period was the artificial, "classical" manner of Fisher Ames. Dignified verse satire at first followed the manner of Pope, and burlesque the manner of Butler. Toward the close of the century, as has been seen, satire in both prose and verse grew bitter and scurrilous.

Political literature never succeeded, however, in assuming

the same degree of importance that religious literature had held in early New England. At the same time that men were most concerned over political freedom they were learning to read works which their fathers had in many cases abhorred, and, even in the most Puritanical colonies, were themselves attempting essays, dramas, lyrics, and fiction. With a few exceptions, like the novels of Brown, these attempts were important only as beginnings, which were to have an undue influence on the work of later Americans. The feeling that a national literature could come by deliberate process of manufacture, rather than by a slow and natural growth, led to much writing that had no real vitality. It was hardly fortunate, either, that America did not acknowledge the eighteenth century English masters until their rule was beginning to be questioned at home. Perhaps the most hopeful sign was the fact that Americans were eclectic in their tastes. The same poet often appreciated and tried to imitate the best things in Pope and the best things in writers of diametrically opposite tendency.

**Significance of  
the Period**

## CHAPTER III

### THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY (1800-1833)

#### I. GENERAL CONDITIONS; THE KNICKERBOCKER WRITERS

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Americans were independent politically, but provincial in manners, tastes, and habits of thinking. Looking back, we see that this was inevitable. A nation could not find distinctive expression in art, literature, and social manners as quickly as it could ratify a treaty. Patriotic Americans of the time, however, felt that the existence of any national deficiency was a matter of shame. Foreign writers soon discovered this sensitiveness and took advantage of it. English travellers made hasty trips through the United States and published their observations in accounts which, though unjust to the better life of the country and in part false, were often painfully true in their pictures of unfortunate national traits. English reviewers of American books were likely to mingle even with their praise patronizing allusions to the barrenness of literature in the new country. To these aspersions American writers replied with absurd denials, bombastic protests, satire, and other weapons ineffectual as against the truth that the charges contained. The reader of this great mass of international writings is forced to the conclusion that, though both sides were unfair, England was more just to America than America to England. It must be said, however, that even reasonably friendly Englishmen rarely neglected an opportunity to taunt Americans with unpleasant facts. This literary antagonism was most intense during the early years of the nineteenth century. Its progress and its

#### Foreign Relationships

gradual disappearance are among the important facts of the period now to be considered.

The wish to confound foreign critics came as an added incentive to the desire to produce a national literature. In general, literary attempts were less ludicrously ambitious than those of the later eighteenth century, though the *Columbiad*, perhaps the worst of all, was published in 1807. Among the unwise demands which were continually made on American authors were those for "sustained effort," rapid composition, and the treatment of American subjects. The cry for "sustained effort," later ridiculed by Poe, probably came from the feeling that nothing but writings on a great scale could adequately represent a great country. A short essay or lyric, no matter how exquisitely wrought, would not be distinctively American. The idea of literary inspiration prevailed, and an author was praised for the ability to compose a poem at one sitting. Painstaking labor was apparently thought unnecessary for a true American genius. The demand for American subjects was an unintentional confession of the provincial character of American work. Style and tone were almost wholly imitative, but it was felt that the subject, at least, might be national.

Almost as marked as provincialism in 1800 was sectionalism. The southern, the middle, and the New England groups of states were almost as far removed from each other as in the colonial time. Indeed, western expansion and the development of diversified trade interests to some extent increased these local differences. To the student of literature the most important result of sectional rivalry was the temporary depression of New England and the rise of New York.

The causes of the economic and political eclipse of New England are too complicated for discussion here. Beginning

with Jefferson's administration the northern Atlantic states were probably the least prosperous section of the country.

**Decline of  
New England** When the depression came the more energetic young men did not remain at home to write Lamentations, but emigrated to the West, carrying with them their sturdiness, their intellectual vigor, and their love of education. The influence of these New England emigrants can be traced in the small colleges of western New York and Ohio, and to some extent in the public schools and state universities of the next group of states to the westward. No doubt these men had more influence on the intellectual life of the nation than would have been the case if they had stayed at home and written books; but for a time literature was deprived of their activities. With so much of the young blood gone, New England remained bound by conservatism, and such able men as were left found large and free expression difficult. Moreover, changes in religious belief began to occupy attention, and many men like the elder Channing, who might have achieved fame in other forms of literature, turned to controversial writing.

On the other hand, New York was rapidly developing. Its harbor, its position with reference to the great routes to the West, and other minor causes soon made it the chief commercial center of the country. With **Rise of  
New York** wealth came leisure and a desire to cultivate art and literature. Along with other business interests were developed those connected closely and remotely with letters. Great publishing houses were founded; and the New York newspapers became, as they have since remained, the most prominent in the country. All these influences tended to encourage writing on the part of native New Yorkers, and to attract men of literary tastes and aspirations from other parts of the country. Among the former were Irving and Drake; among the latter, Cooper, Bryant, Halleck, and Willis. These men and their

literary associates came to be known as the Knickerbocker school or, more accurately, as the Knickerbocker group. Their connection was primarily geographical and temporary. Still, most of them were acquaintances, and some of them were close friends. Naturally they were all influenced to some extent by the conditions of the time and of the city in which they lived. An attempt to connect them very closely will, however, lead to misunderstanding.

The most effective work of these men was done within the limits assigned to this period, though neither the opening nor the closing date has any especial significance.

**The Knickerbocker Writers**      The former, 1800, is chosen mainly for convenience, since the New York writers hardly made themselves felt before the publication of *Salmagundi* in 1807 and the *Knickerbocker History* in 1809. The year 1833 is arbitrarily assumed as a point of demarcation between two periods widely different. Between 1830 and 1835, and indefinitely for some years before and after, a spirit of change was felt throughout the western civilized world. The political revolutions in France, Belgium, and Poland, the passage of the Reform bill, the abolition of slavery and the rise of the tractarian movement in England, the development of Transcendentalism and the welcoming of German influence in America, were widely different manifestations of the same or related tendencies. This new spirit of the time and the new social and political conditions that grew partly out of the settlement of the West and partly out of the increase in commercial prosperity brought forward new national questions. By 1833 the nation was aware of the change; and though most of the Knickerbocker group continued to write after that time they added little to their fame, and were forced to relinquish the lead in literary activity to the younger men who were already writing in New England.

**The Limits of the Period**



The most representative of the Knickerbocker writers and the one whose own writings supplied the designation for the group was Washington Irving (1783-1859). He was born in New York city, the son of a well-to-do hardware merchant. His father was a stern Scotch Presbyterian; his mother was of English ancestry, an Episcopalian, and a woman of gentle and lovable qualities. As the youngest of a family in which there were several sons, Washington fell mostly under the charge of his mother. Some excuse for a lack of vigorous discipline may be found in his delicate health. At all events, he seems to have done much as he pleased. The elder sons had been graduated from Columbia and entered their father's business. Washington's desultory schooling ended at the age of sixteen, when he nominally began the study of law. Before this time he had read much, had made a boyish attempt at writing verses and a play, and had acquired a fondness for the theatre, which he formed the habit of visiting without his father's consent. It was also without the knowledge of his father that he was confirmed in the Episcopal church. His law studies were pursued with little energy and were often interrupted. He made trips up the Hudson, in 1803 he visited Montreal and Quebec, and in 1804 he was sent abroad for his health. Some time afterward he became engaged to Miss Matilda Hoffman, daughter of his law preceptor. The death of this young woman in 1809 is often held to mark one of the turning-points in his life. Irving was never married.

Irving's writings are closely associated with the events of his life, and fall naturally into five groups; his early attempts, before he adopted literature as a profession; the Sketch-Book group; the Spanish group; the writings on Western American themes; and the later biographies and miscellaneous sketches. His first published work was the *Jonathan Oldstyle Papers*,

**Washington  
Irving**

**Irving's Early  
Writings**

written for the New York "Morning Chronicle" in 1802-3. These are plainly imitative of Addison, and the author chose for them a name which suggests one of the distinctive qualities of all his writings. After his return from Europe he was associated with his brother William and his friend James K. Paulding in the production of *Salmagundi*, another Addisonian series published in 1807. These papers discussed the theatre, society, and sometimes politics.

Shortly after the publication of *Salmagundi* it occurred to Washington Irving and another brother, Peter, that there would be sport in writing a burlesque on Dr. **Knickerbocker's** Samuel Mitchell's *Picture of New York*, an **History of** historical work that had recently appeared. **New York** accordingly they set to work, with energy worthy a more serious object, to collect material for erudite footnotes and learned references. The work seems to have been fairly under way when Peter Irving relinquished his part in the undertaking. Washington then altered the plan, which had been to continue the history of New York to date, condensed the part already written into four introductory chapters, and developed the history of the "Dutch dynasty." It was while he was engaged on this work that Miss Hoffman died. After the first intensity of his grief was passed he returned to it as a diversion, and some of the most humorous parts are said to have been written after her death. The public had been prepared for the book by the publication in New York papers of clever advertisements concerning the disappearance of the supposed author, Diedrich Knickerbocker. That the hoax might be less readily detected Irving took the manuscript to Philadelphia, where it was printed in 1809.

The publication of the *Knickerbocker's History of New York* is so important that it is sometimes taken to mark an epoch in the history of American literature. It was the first American book, with the exception of Franklin's *Autobiogra-*

*phy*, to establish a permanent reputation for literary merit. After more than a hundred years it is one of the books with which every well-read American is supposed to be familiar. A little of its fame is perhaps due to the reflected glory of Irving's later works; and a little, perhaps, to the adoption of "Knickerbocker" as applicable to everything from New York; but the intrinsic merits of the book entitle it to the place that it has held.

In style the *Knickerbocker's History* differs greatly from the *Oldstyle Papers* and *Salmagundi*. The authors by whom

Irving was influenced are uncertain. Sir Walter Scott and others made comparisons with Swift and Sterne. The question is hardly worth considering. The important matter is that Irving had evolved a style so far original that it was not a plain imitation of any author. Other important characteristics of the *History* can best be seen by comparing it with the works of Irving's immediate predecessors, the Hartford Wits. From these it differed in the lack of a didactic purpose, in its use of humor, and in its attitude toward moral questions. A few half-veiled political allusions appealed to contemporary readers, but the work was written not to teach but to amuse. The objects of the author's ridicule were chosen, not because of any feeling against them, but because they were available for his purpose. Indeed, Irving and his readers both feel more kindly toward them because they lend themselves to the fun-making. A few of the more serious-minded descendants of Dutch families at first resented the caricatures of their ancestors, but even these soon felt the geniality of the satire and were proud to be called "Knickerbockers." Another point of difference between Irving and his predecessors is his attitude on moral questions. In this he resembled old England of the eighteenth century far more than New England. The *Knickerbocker's History* is not in the slightest

degree immoral; but it treats flippantly vices which the Puritan felt he could speak of only with abhorrence. The author is evidently a healthy, lively young fellow, not necessarily wicked himself, but willing to joke over the sins of others.

For ten years after the publication of the *Knickerbocker's History* Irving did no literary work except to serve for a

#### A Period of Literary Inactivity

short time as editor of "Select Reviews," afterward the "Analectic Magazine." He became a partner in the firm of Irving Brothers, importing cutlers, but at first he had little to do with the business. He visited Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, made many friends, and enjoyed the social side of life. The war of 1812 threw the affairs of the cutlery firm into confusion, and at its close in 1815 Washington Irving was sent to England to look after the interests there. He seems to have attended to business faithfully, if not with enthusiasm. In 1818, however, the firm failed, and he resolved to support himself by writing. Accordingly, he went down to London and began work upon the *Sketch Book*.

The *Sketch Book* was intended for American readers, and was published in New York in parts of four or five sketches each, beginning early in the summer of 1819.

#### The Sketch Book

The London "Literary Gazette" began to reprint these parts as soon as they were received, and in self-defense Irving resolved to bring the work out in London himself. After unfortunate experiences with other publishers he established, through the friendly mediation of Walter Scott, a connection with Murray, the most important publisher of the day, that continued throughout his life.

The chief characteristics of the *Sketch Book* are those that are found in all the best of Irving's later writings. The style is neither that of *Salmagundi*, nor of *Knickerbocker*, though there are elements of both. Critics have suggested indebtedness to Addison, Steele, Sterne, Mackenzie, Goldsmith, and

others. It is significant that all these authors belong to the school just going out of fashion. Irving's style, though individual, was influenced by the more graceful and sentimental writers of the eighteenth century. His subjects were not altogether such as the more formal of his masters would have chosen. He had a love for the old, the romantic, the picturesque. He prefixed his sketches with mottoes from old songs and old plays, and he rummaged in the British Museum for antiquarian information such as he used in the sketches of Christmas festivities at an English country-house. He had a fondness, too, for the sentimental and the pathetic, as is seen in such pieces as "The Wife," "Rural Funerals," "The Widow and her Son." Speaking generally, his subjects tend toward the romantic, and his style is that of the eighteenth century.

The *Sketch Book* was cordially received in both England and America, and the public began to call upon the author for something more. The articles in the *Sketch Book* that received most praise were the Christmas sketches and the American stories "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow;" and in *Bracebridge Hall*, his next volume, Irving continues these two forms of writing. The antiquarian learning shown in the descriptions of old English customs doubtless represents much preliminary work in the British Museum. Most of the book was actually written in Paris, where the author spent some time in company with Thomas Moore and other literary friends. In the original plan Buckthorne, an author, was to be one of the chief characters, but Irving decided to reserve him for the hero of the novel which his friends were urging him to write. The slight thread of story running through *Bracebridge Hall* is no doubt a concession to this demand for a "sustained" work of fiction. The book was ready for the printer early in 1822, and was brought out simultaneously in England and America. A few English reviews objected that the pictures of



country life were untrue, and some of the author's countrymen complained that it was un-American, but in general it was well received, and further exertions were demanded from the author.

With these demands Irving did not find it easy to comply. He tried to make use of Buckthorne in a novel to be called

**The Tales of  
a Traveller**

*The History of an Author*; he conceived a series of tales on the legendary superstitions of Germany; and he abandoned these in favor

of two volumes more of *Sketch Book*. Finally he decided on the form which the *Tales of a Traveller* now bears. To make this somewhat heterogeneous work he cut up what he had already written of the *History of an Author*, and combined with the tales so formed material that he might have used in the German legends and the new *Sketch Book*. Much of the German material he had gathered in a trip up the Rhine and to Vienna and Dresden. He began the manuscript when he reached Paris on the return journey, and finished it in England in 1824. Even after it had gone to the printer it was found insufficient to fill the specified two volumes, and he was obliged to write more sketches and to expand some already written.

Of the three works published between 1819 and 1824 the *Sketch Book* takes highest rank. It is fresher, more spon-

**Three Works  
Compared**

taneous, and more varied than the others. A few of the sketches are almost universally known. The popularity of "Rip Van Winkle"

may have been increased by the wonderful dramatic interpretation of Joseph Jefferson; but the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," in the broader vein of *Knickerbocker*, is almost equally a favorite. Even the English sketches, many of them on unpromising subjects and tinged with a sentimentality now wholly out of fashion, charm by their clearness and beauty of expression. In *Bracebridge Hall* the style is even smoother,



but somewhat less vital and expressive. There is less narrative than the plan of the work seems to call for, and the many descriptions of persons and scenes, strung on so slight a thread of story, become a little monotonous. Only the sketch of "The Stout Gentleman" approaches "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" in popularity. The *Tales of a Traveller* has greater variety than *Bracebridge Hall*, but is inferior in almost every way. Irving was not thoroughly familiar with the spirit of the Continental countries in which many of his scenes were laid. His acquaintance with the cruder forms of German romanticism seems to have had a particularly unfortunate effect upon his work. He rarely succeeded in a story of action, and in this collection he attempted many lively tales. Buckthorne is a less pleasing character than most of his literary creations. Moreover, his taste seems to have failed him as it rarely did. "The Story of the Young Robber" fortunately finds no parallel in his other writings.

Irving's difficulties in preparing the *Tales of a Traveller* doubtless showed him that he had worked out the vein opened in the *Sketch Book*. If not he must have been warned by the reviews, English and American. These, while mostly friendly, were not lavish in their praises, and many of them made unfavorable comparison with the earlier volumes. So it came about that Irving found himself, at the age of forty-two, a literary man with an established reputation looking for a remunerative literary job. He declined liberal offers of editorships because he disliked to be tied down to routine work. He refused to contribute to the London "Quarterly Review" because it was unfavorable to America. While still uncertain what to do he went over to Bordeaux "to see the vintage." Here he lingered until he received from Alexander H. Everett, then United States minister to Spain, the suggestion that he

**Irving in Search  
of a Subject**

translate Navarette's *Voyages of Columbus*, soon to appear at Madrid.

On reaching the Spanish capital he found Navarette's work too scrappy to suit his purpose, and he resolved to write an independent life of Columbus. Accordingly he remained at Madrid, working on manuscripts in the government archives and on other original sources. Following a habit of his, he laid aside the *Life of Columbus* to write the first draft of the *Conquest of Granada*, and the former was not finished until 1827 and not published until 1828. He now travelled about Spain, visited the Alhambra, and settled down for about a year at Seville. Here he prepared a second edition of the *Columbus*, and put the *Conquest of Granada* into shape. In 1829 he made another visit to the Alhambra, and it is chiefly the experiences of this second trip that are narrated in the work of that name. The *Legends of the Conquest of Spain* are said to have been finished at this time, but they were not published until later. In 1829 Irving was appointed secretary of legation at London. Here he put in shape the *Voyages of the Companions of Columbus* and the *Alhambra*.

The Spanish subjects to which Irving was led by the chance suggestion of Everett were admirably suited to his taste.

The two chief characteristics seen in the *Sketch Book* were love of the picturesque and genuine patriotism. Spain could gratify the first of these, and Columbus had a connection with America. Irving's fitness for writing biography and history was, however, not remarkable. He was careful, conscientious, and though desultory in his methods, by no means afraid of hard work. He investigated thoroughly many authorities. But he had neither the training nor the temperament of an ideal biographer. Even in the languages that he must use he was mostly self-taught. He had an eye for the

### The Spanish Writings

### Characteristics of the Spanish Works

picturesque rather than for that which was intrinsically important. The result was that in the *Life of Columbus* he produced a work readable, accurate in statement of unquestioned fact, and as judicial as he knew how to make it, but not, as the great biography must be, the final word on the subject. In the *Conquest of Granada* he made the mistake of trying to tell history in the guise of fiction. The work purports to be extracts from the chronicle of an imaginary monk, Fray Antonio Agapida. Irving intended Fray Antonio to personify the churchman's intense hatred of the Moors, as Carlyle signified a certain temper of mind by Dry-as-Dust. The device was an unfortunate one. The monk is always felt to be a dummy, and his presence tends to discredit the whole work. Irving saw this as soon as the book was published. In a review that, according to the custom of the time, he was asked to write for the "Quarterly" his one object was to maintain that the narrative is veritable history. In the *Alhambra* he was again free to mingle his observations and the results of his imagination without the historian's strict subserviency to facts. This collection of descriptions and tales is called with some justice a Spanish Sketch Book; but it is somewhat thinner and less virile than the earlier work. It seems, too, a little more artificial, as if the author had planned some of his experiences in the old Moorish palace for the "copy" that might be made of them. With the passing of the popular fondness for sentiment it has probably suffered more than the *Sketch Book*.

The *Alhambra* was published just as Irving returned to America in 1832. He had been absent about half a generation, during which time he had achieved an international reputation, and his native country had experienced great changes. He had always protested his loyalty to America, but had said that he found less distraction from work and more

**Writings on  
American  
Subjects**

inspiration in the old world. Although there had been much newspaper criticism of his course in remaining abroad, his reception on his return was enthusiastic, and there was a general demand that he write on American themes. It may have been in response to this demand that he took an extensive trip through the new West, going with a government party as far as the Arkansas river, and returning by way of New Orleans and Washington. The literary result of this journey was *A Tour on the Prairies*, published with other material as the *Crayon Miscellany* in 1835.

Even before the *Miscellany* appeared Irving had received from John Jacob Astor a request to write the history of that merchant's business ventures on the Pacific coast. The circumstances attending the preparation of *Astoria* were once the subject of much controversy, now of interest only as showing how jealously the country watched its literary men. The unquestioned facts are that John Jacob Astor offered to pay Irving for writing the history; that at the suggestion of the latter his nephew, Pierre M. Irving, was employed on the work at a liberal salary paid by Astor; and that the book appeared as *Astoria*, by Washington Irving. It was charged that Pierre M. Irving did most of the work, and that Washington Irving sold his name to Astor for a large sum. Pierre M. Irving maintains, and there is no good reason for doubting his word, that his own labors were mostly clerical, and that his uncle received no remuneration except from the sale of the book in the usual way.

The third of Irving's writings with a western American theme was more purely a commercial venture. While engaged on *Astoria* he met Captain Bonneville, an adventurer who had spent some time in the West, and had prepared an account of his experiences. Irving bought his manuscript for \$1,000, touched it up somewhat—very slightly, if his preface

**Adventures of  
Captain  
Bonneville**



present neglect of the work is due, however, not to its lack of picturesqueness, but to the fact that it represents a kind of biography now out of fashion. In the early years of the century the veneration of Washington was carried to ridiculous extremes. Even conservative magazines printed his name only in capitals; and the introduction of the Commander-in-Chief, even in disguise, in Cooper's *Spy* was condemned as sacrilege. Irving belonged to the time when these traditions prevailed; and his ancestry, his training, even his name, predisposed him to take an exalted view of his hero. It should be remembered to his credit that, artificial as the Washington he pictured seems to us, the portrait is more lifelike than any drawn by his predecessors.

Irving lived until a change in literary taste had taken place. Just after his death there was a reaction against his works,

**General  
Characteristics  
of Irving**

and a generation fed on Transcendentalism and reform felt that they were thin and unprofitable. Since that time there has been no enthusiastic Irving revival, yet he has slowly increased and seems to be still increasing in popular favor. In a study of American literature he is important, if for no other reason, because of his historical position. He was the first American to win international fame solely as an author. He was one of the first Americans to write without a didactic purpose. He was the last and the greatest of the American Addisonians. The intrinsic merit of his writings, however, warrants his fame. This merit is of style rather than of content, though the two are inseparable. And in style his writings are surprisingly uniform. Unlike Charles Brockden Brown and many other men who have depended on authorship for support, he did not divide his time between hackwork and more purely literary efforts. Virtually everything that he wrote appears in his collected works; and there are few pages of which he need have felt ashamed or which



the reader with leisure will not find fairly interesting. Still, his fame has come to rest mainly on the *Knickerbocker History*, the three works of the *Sketch Book* group, and the more imaginative of the Spanish writings; and in these may be seen his chief excellences. The adjective most frequently applied by contemporaries to both the man and his writings was "genial." With geniality were combined a certain old-fashioned quality and a masculine delicacy of taste. It is easy to enumerate many things that he could not do, yet he appeals as do few other American authors to the reader who is in the proper mood.

The second of the greater Knickerbockers was James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851). He was born at Burlington, New Jersey, but before he was a year old his father removed to Cooperstown, New York, a settlement founded on a large family estate in the wilderness. There was Quaker blood in his father's family, and his mother was of Swedish descent. His boyhood was spent among the heterogeneous population of a backwoods settlement. Here he attended the village school, dignified by the name of "The Academy," and then continued his studies under a clergyman near Albany. In 1802, at the age of thirteen, he entered Yale college. According to his own statement he studied little, and in his junior year was dismissed for his share in some college scrape. It was then decided that he should enter the navy. As there was at this time no naval academy it was necessary for him to serve an apprenticeship in the merchant marine, and he shipped as a common sailor on a vessel bound for England and Mediterranean ports. In 1808 he was commissioned as midshipman, and was detailed with a party sent to supervise the construction of a brig on Lake Ontario—an experience that he later made use of in writing *The Pathfinder*. He also saw some sea duty. In 1811 he married Miss DeLancey, of Westchester

James  
Fenimore  
Cooper

county, New York; and as his wife objected to the separation involved in a naval career he resigned from the service. For some years he lived at various places in New York state, with no other occupation than managing his property.

It was in 1820, when Cooper was past thirty years of age, that he chanced to remark that he could write a better story

**Cooper's  
First Novel**

than some fashionable novel which he was reading. According to tradition, his wife dared him to make good the boast. As he had never

written anything, or taken any interest in literature, it is unlikely that she expected him to do so. But he set to work, and before the close of the year had completed *Precaution*, a novel of English society life, with much pious moralizing. It seems dull now, but it was a fair representative of a type then in fashion, and was good enough to be reprinted in England, and to receive favorable notice from some reviewers who took it to be the work of an English woman. This would seem to indicate that it was superficially true to conventional ideas, if not to life, in its portrayal of English society. The author had seen England only as a sailor with a few days of shore leave in London, and it is a mystery where he obtained his ideas of English affairs. Very likely he had absorbed them from novels of the same sort that he attempted.

The success of *Precaution* was not great, but it was enough to encourage another attempt. The author's friends of course

**The Spy  
The Pioneers  
The Pilot**

urged him to try an American subject. Probably the example of the author of *Waverly* inclined him to the historical novel. He took as the germ of his next story, *The Spy*, some anecdotes that he had heard from John Jay regarding an American secret service agent in the Revolutionary war. The scene

is laid in Westchester county, with which he had become thoroughly familiar after his marriage. He worked with little enthusiasm, the writing dragged, and it is said that, in order

to satisfy his printer that the work would really have an end, he wrote the last chapters and had them printed and paged before he completed the earlier parts of the second volume. Late in 1821, however, *The Spy* appeared, and met with a sale unprecedented in American fiction. This seems to have determined Cooper on more systematic authorship, though in the preface to his next work, *The Pioneers*, he expressed himself as still undecided. He removed to New York city, where he was in closer touch with publishers, and where he founded the Bread and Cheese Lunch, a club of which most of the other Knickerbocker writers were members. In *The Pioneers* he portrayed the frontier life that he had seen in boyhood. Before this appeared he had decided upon another work under circumstances slightly similar to those which led to *Precaution*. In a discussion of the identity of the "Great Unknown" he had maintained that *The Pirate* was written by a landsman, and that a sailor would have achieved greater effects with the same material. One of his hearers was incredulous, and to show what could be made of a sea tale he decided to write one himself. *The Pilot* followed closely upon *The Pioneers*, both of them appearing in 1823.

Within less than four years after Cooper blundered, so to speak, into authorship, he had produced four novels of four distinct types—the novel of fashionable society, the historical novel of the Revolution, the novel of frontier life, and the sea tale. The first of these was relatively a failure; but in all the others he had succeeded, and *The Spy*, *The Pioneers*, and *The Pilot* are still among his most popular works. The historical novel appealed to him most strongly—both *The Spy* and *The Pilot* are to a certain extent of this class—and he decided on a series of tales based on Revolutionary happenings in various states. The only one written was *Lionel Lincoln*, for Massachusetts. This represents much careful study,

**Variety of  
Cooper's Early  
Work**

but the author could never do justice to New England, and it fell flat. He then returned to the frontier tale and wrote what many consider his masterpiece—*The Last of the Mohicans*.

In 1826 Cooper went abroad and remained for seven years, visiting most of the countries that a traveller ordinarily sees, but spending more time in France than elsewhere. His travels did not interfere with his writing. In the first two years of his foreign residence he produced *The Prairie* and *The Red Rover*, which continue the frontier stories and the sea tales respectively. *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* and *The Water-Witch*, published in the next two years, were less successful. Before they appeared Cooper was being drawn into the controversies that occupied much of his later life. He was irritated by the ignorance and misconceptions of Europeans, and particularly of Englishmen, regarding America. At the same time he felt that Americans lacked much of the refinement of the old world and were too self-satisfied. With a view to correcting the ideas of both parties he had written in 1828 *Notions of the Americans Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor*, a series of imaginary letters by an imaginary English traveller in America. He had a knack of antagonizing both sides in any controversy that he entered, and this book was not especially pleasing to either Englishmen or Americans. The course of European events, including the revolution in France and the revolt in Poland, now attracted his attention, and his next three novels, *The Bravo*, *The Heidenmauer*, and *The Headsman*, have European settings. This does not imply a diminution of the author's Americanism, for all the stories exalt the idea of democracy.

In 1833 he returned to America and settled at Cooperstown. For almost all the remaining eighteen years of his life he was engaged in quarrels. The history of these troubles occupies

Writings  
Produced  
Abroad

much space in a complete biography of Cooper, but it is hardly worth the reader's time. The unpopularity caused by what he had written while abroad was increased by *A Letter to his Countrymen*, a pamphlet in which he grew indignant at some of the criticisms on his novels, expressed contempt for the American press, and touched on politics in a way to anger both parties. *The Monikins*, a poor attempt at a satirical novel, had the same effect. In 1836-38 he published ten volumes of travels in which he pointed out the faults of Europe and America in a way that was pleasing to neither. Meanwhile he had trouble with his neighbors over the right of the public to use part of the Cooper estate as a picnic ground. The quarrel was trivial, but it was taken up by the press of the country to Cooper's disadvantage; and it led to two novels, *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found*, which state Cooper's side of the matter, and contain much criticism of America. By this time he had come to be looked upon as an unreasonable grumbler, and a slanderer of his country, and was everywhere assailed. In 1839 he brought out his *History of the Navy of the United States*, a work which he had long had in mind. Two rival officers were claiming credit for the battle of Lake Erie, and as Cooper's judgment was not wholly in favor of either, the partisans of both added their clamors to those of his other enemies. Cooper had already begun suits for libel against newspapers in various parts of the country, and these were increased in number and continued for several years. He was successful in almost all, and it seems to be the verdict of a later generation that his worst offense was a lack of tact, and that his traducers were wholly unjustified.

It is strange that in 1840 and 1841, in the midst of these disquieting experiences, Cooper produced two of his calmest and most successful stories, *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*. Most of his other late novels have a controversial

**Controversies  
at Home**



or at least a strong didactic element. Of these, *Mercedes of Castile*, which appeared between *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*, is a story of the voyages of Columbus. *The Two Admirals*, *Wing-and-Wing*, *Ned Meyers*, and *Afloat and Ashore* deal with the sea. *Wyandotte* is a frontier story. *Satanstoe*, *The Chainbearer*, and *The Redskins* form a series called forth by Cooper's interest in the anti-rent war, waged by tenants against the patroon system in New York. *The Crater*, *Jack Tier*, *The Oak Openings*, *The Sea-Lions*, and *The Ways of the Hour*, which appeared between 1847 and 1850, show an increase in didacticism and a decrease in creative imagination. It is said that the author contemplated a tale in which his favorite hero, Leatherstocking, should take part in the Revolution, but if the design existed its execution was prevented by his death.

#### Cooper's Later Novels

If popularity be accepted as a test only two novels written after 1828, *The Pathfinder* and *The Deerslayer*, deserve to rank with those of earlier date. Of the other later works, some of the sea stories are still read, though usually by persons who have enjoyed *The Pilot* and *The Red Rover*, and who hope for something more of the same kind. The writings on which the author's reputation now rests are *The Spy*, *The Pilot*, *The Red Rover*, and the five frontier stories in which the character of Leatherstocking appears—*The Pioneers*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Prairie*, *The Pathfinder*, and *The Deerslayer*.\*

#### Cooper's Best Work

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\* This is the order in which the "Leatherstocking Tales" were written. Arranged according to the events of the hero's life they would stand: *The Deerslayer*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pioneers*, and *The Prairie*. Cooper began by picturing an old hunter such as the proprietor of Cooperstown doubtless found when he began his settlement. In later volumes he represents different epochs in the life of such a character. *The Deerslayer* pictures the young hunter just showing his aptness for woodcraft; *The Pathfinder* shows the lover; *The Last of the Mohicans* the woodsman in his prime; and *The Prairie* the old man, driven from his favorite hunting grounds in the forest by the advancing settlements.



Special praise for the other stories is not hard to find. Bancroft pronounced the description of the battle of Bunker Hill in *Lionel Lincoln* the best ever written; Bryant admired the spirit and lifelike quality of *Jack Tier*; and only the other day a much-travelled English woman said that *The Bravo* was still the best guidebook to Venice. None of these works, however, appeals as a whole to the ordinary reader, and the novel of adventure that does not so appeal is a failure.

In judging of the unsuccessful novels and miscellaneous works the reader is hampered by an imperfect knowledge of

the author's personality. It was Cooper's dying wish that no authorized biography be permitted, and his family have never opened to the public any of the special sources of information in their possession. Cooper was a man with few close friends, and his manner, both in writing and in personal intercourse, was such as often to be misunderstood. It is unfortunate that posterity has not the fullest opportunity to do him justice. Certain characteristics are, however, fairly apparent. He was by conviction and hereditary instinct an aristocrat, yet he was by political conviction a democrat. In religion he combined a love of the forms of Episcopalianism with almost Puritan ideas of conduct; so that it has been said that he hated the Puritans because he was so much like them. His many troubles seem to have been brought about by a lack of tact and a mistaken idea that it is always the duty of a friend to tell unpleasant truths. His strictures on America were not made, as was charged, because he was unpatriotic, but because he really wished that America might know her faults and mend them.

These personal peculiarities explain much that was weak and unfortunate and ephemeral in Cooper's work. The enduring qualities of his better stories are associated with his genuine love of what is best in America, and his wholesome,

large-hearted appreciation of nature and those types of men that are nearest nature. The scenes of all his best stories are laid in America or on board American ships, and his best characters are all Americans. His pictures of the forest, the lake and the sea have a wonderful freedom and life. One of the best indications of their merits is the fact that his long descriptions do not seem intolerable in an exciting story. The action rarely appears to drag except in those unfortunate novels where the author lectures and preaches.

An unfriendly critic can easily formulate a long series of charges against Cooper. He fails in psychological analysis of the more complex types of man. He cannot portray a gentleman, or a New Englander, or a woman. He has little command of humor.

**Cooper's  
Defects and  
Excellences**

His plots are not carefully constructed and if coolly analyzed often seem improbable in detail. He overworks a few devices, such as the "broken twig" which Mark Twain ridicules, and the abstracted manner of his naval heroes. His language is often inexact and he sometimes makes downright grammatical blunders.

The wise admirer of Cooper will concede the truth of most of these charges, but will maintain that they are not sufficient to justify the condemnation of his works. If

**Cooper's  
Literary Sins  
Venial**

he cannot portray the intricate workings of a complex mind, he has chosen as his heroes men of simple life and elemental passions.

Harvey Birch, Leatherstocking, and Tom Coffin, however unsatisfactory to a devotee of realism, have impressed thousands of readers as true to life. Even the imbecility of his women, of which much has been said, is not a fatal defect. The fashion of his time was that heroes should be of the male sex; and the weakness of those dependent upon them emphasized their manly qualities by contrast. That he could portray at least one type of strong-minded woman is shown by

Betty Flanagan in *The Spy*. Moreover, Cooper's lackadaisical heroines are not unlike those of other novelists of his time, and the student of the period hesitates to say that they are wholly untrue to life. It was as much the fashion for women to be helpless and clinging then as it is for them to be athletic now; and in literature for and about women, and in personal letters that have been preserved, is evidence of the existence of a race of beings very similar to the "females" of *The Pilot* and *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Cooper's lack of humor is a defect, but it is not noticed except when he attempts an unsuccessful comic character like the music master in *The Last of the Mohicans*, or the tailor and his wife in *The Red Rover*. The plots, whatever their defects, do not fail to hold interest, and in the outcome to satisfy a sense of poetic justice. Inconsistencies may be striking when they are pointed out, but the man who cares for a story of adventure rarely notices them as he reads. The defects of style are explained, though of course not excused, by the author's lack of early training and his haste in composition. They are not so serious as is often supposed, and the language often has ease of movement and genuine power.

Final judgment on the value of Cooper's works could be passed only after deciding the relative merits of different schools of fiction. Without discussing this question, one may fairly say that the narration of heroic deeds has been popular from the days of Homer to those of Stevenson, and is likely to be popular longer still. Critics who feel that the tale of adventure gratifies only a crude taste will of course give Cooper little consideration. Those who insist on a certain preconceived standard of literary expression may find some things in his novels which they will not enjoy. Those, however, who require of such fiction only that it be absorbingly interesting, and that it contain nothing to shock the moral or esthetic

#### Cooper's Real Value

sense, will be likely to rank him high. In the past there have been many of the last-mentioned class. Some of the men who were most hostile to the author personally were enthusiastic admirers of his works. His better novels have been translated not once but many times into most European languages, and it is said into those of the East. So far as can be judged their popularity is no less now than it was fifty years ago, and this in spite of the fact that in the meantime all literary tendencies have pointed in a different direction.

Whatever judgment is passed on his literary merits, it must be remembered that Cooper created the American novel of the sea, and practically created the American frontier story and the American historical novel. In his choice of literary form he was influenced by Scott; but once started he was in no sense an imitator. His American predecessors taught him nothing. That it was not easy to grow the flowers even after he had furnished the seed is shown by the fate of dozens of frontier stories written as soon as he had popularized the type. With the exception of those by Simms, hardly one is remembered by name. In his field Cooper was the pioneer and he still stands alone.

William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), the third of the more important Knickerbocker writers, was one of the many New

**William Cullen Bryant** England men who were attracted to New York. He was born in Cummington, Massachusetts, where his father was a physician and a man of some importance in the community. In his early years his maternal grandfather, an old Puritan of the strictest school, had a considerable hand in family discipline; and Bryant mentions the impression made upon him by "prayers which were poems from beginning to end, mostly made up of sentences from the Old Testament writers." A little later

the father, while in Boston as a member of the legislature, was attracted by Unitarianism and the son afterward followed his lead; but the impressions made by this early training remained.

After receiving his elementary education Bryant studied Latin and Greek under two clergymen, one of whom, it is interesting to note, gave him instruction and board for a dollar a week. At the age of sixteen he was prepared to enroll as a sophomore in Williams college, then a struggling institution with but four instructors. His father was unable to give him a college education, and after one year he left Williams to take up the study of law. In time he was admitted to the bar and became a moderately successful country practitioner at Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

From an early age Bryant had been a great reader. His father's library contained the eighteenth century English classics in prose and verse, and the works of the earlier American poets. Before he went to college he had read a large and surprisingly heterogeneous list of books. At twelve he was enthusiastic over Pope's Homer, and he always retained a kindly feeling for Pope, though he differed from him widely in poetic ideals. Later, he had a Scott period, which resulted in some attempts at narrative poems on Indian subjects, and a Byron period of which he was afterward ashamed. Shortly after leaving college he was interested in the gloomy sentimentalists like Blair and Henry Kirke White. His favorite poet, however, from the time that he first saw the Lyrical Ballads, was Wordsworth. His versification, especially his blank verse, shows most influence of Wordsworth, with some qualities derived from his early familiarity with Pope. It is noticeable that though his earliest attempts were in the heroic couplet, he soon dropped that measure altogether, and it is found in no poem in his collected works. Still, his fondness for a

#### **Bryant's Early Reading**



marked rhythmical beat is seen in a few peculiarities of his versification. With the eighteenth century writers of blank verse he has little in common.

Bryant himself tells us that in his very early childhood he used to pray that he might write verses that should endure.

**Early Verse Writing** When thirteen years of age he wrote a political satire, "The Embargo," which was published, and republished with affidavits certifying to the precocity of the author. While at Williams college he began a narrative poem on an Indian subject. When seventeen or eighteen years of age, and while under the influence of Henry Kirke White and others of his school, he wrote the greater part of "Thanatopsis," but the poem was not published until 1817. "To a Waterfowl" was written at the age of nineteen. In 1821 he was invited to deliver the annual poem before the Phi Beta Kappa society of Harvard. It is an indication of the state of poetry at the time that this honor went to a country boy who had attended college but one year, and whose reputation rested on a few poems in the magazines. His performance on this occasion was "The Ages." In the same year he published his first collection of poems, a volume of only forty-four pages, containing "Thanatopsis," "To a Waterfowl," "The Ages," "The Yellow Violet," and a few others. During the next few years he wrote a large number of his shorter poems.

All this time Bryant had been practicing law in western Massachusetts, and his affiliations had been with Boston rather than with New York. The law had always been somewhat distasteful to him, and in 1825 he gave up his practice and went to New York as editor of the "New York Review and Athenæum Magazine." This periodical soon failed, and after some vicissitudes he accepted an editorship on the "Evening Post." In 1828 he became editor in chief. In 1834 he went to Europe for

**Removal to New York**



two years and on his return assumed both the business and the editorial responsibility of the "Post." From this time until his death he led the active life of a New York newspaper man, relieving the monotony of his work by frequent trips abroad, by the purchase and improvement of a country place on Long Island and of the Bryant homestead at Cummington, and by literary diversions.

On his arrival in New York in 1825 he established personal relations with most of the literary men of the city, and with several of the young enthusiasts who were trying to develop the fine arts in America. He came too late, however, to be much influenced by these men, or to exert much influence on them. In 1825 he was thirty-one years of age, the head of a family, and a man of considerable business and professional experience. Many of his poems, including the two usually named as his best, were already written. The other Knickerbockers had also done much of their best work and were not likely to be changed by a new-comer. Such influence as Bryant did exert was, however, of a kind much needed. In a time when rapidity of composition was prized before other excellences he stood for care and revision. Though never a deep student, he endeavoured to take a broad view of literary matters, and his criticisms were more judicial than those of most of his contemporaries.

For half a century the great bulk of Bryant's writings was composed of editorial articles. These hardly rank as literature, and few of them have been reprinted. Like most of his work they are careful and sedate, though not lacking in strength. In style they differ widely from the breezy editorials that have more recently characterized the "Post," yet they appealed to the same high class of readers. As an editor Bryant was especially interested in the improvement of news-

**Bryant and  
Other  
Knickerbockers**

**Bryant's  
Editorial  
Articles**

paper English, and his rules for the printers of the "Post" are still traditions in many composing rooms.

The two volumes of prose in Bryant's collected works include tales and sketches, lectures, magazine articles on literature and art, and memorial addresses. Many of the lighter articles first appeared in the "Talisman," a literary annual issued in 1827, 1828, and 1829 by Bryant, Verplanck, and Sands, and illustrated by Inman, S. F. B. Morse, and other artist friends of the editors. Bryant could not tell a story and he soon gave up the attempt. Some of the magazine articles show his interest in literary subjects and his appreciation of scholarly methods. An early paper "On Trisyllabic feet in Iambic Measure," though dealing with the mere rudiments of versification, shows research in a field that had hardly been touched in America. Some lectures on English poetry are absurdly inclusive, but indicate careful work. The memorial addresses date from the later years of his life. They invariably contain over-praise, but except for this are admirable.

Excellent as was Bryant's work as editor and critic, it is to his verse alone that he owes his position among American authors. Yet his verse writing was always incidental to his regular duties. All his poetry except his translation of Homer is collected in one small volume. Of this over one-fourth was written before he came to New York in 1825, and the rest was scattered over the fifty-three remaining years of his life. After he went to New York he studied several modern languages, and the result of this study and of his first visit to Europe was a number of translations of short poems. The influence of Irving on American taste is seen in the fact that over one-half of these are from the Spanish. The translation of Homer was taken up as a diversion after the death of his wife in 1866. The "Iliad" was published in 1870, the "Odyssey" in 1872.

**Bryant's  
Miscellaneous  
Prose**

**Bryant's  
Poems**

In the poems certain limitations are at once apparent. The author could not tell a story, though he succeeded slightly better in verse than in prose. He had, if one may judge by his writings, no sense of humor. Few things in literature are more painful than the lines "To a Mosquito," and "A Meditation on Rhode Island Coal." He lacked passion, fire, definite human sympathy.

Bryant's excellences are best seen in poems that present two favorite ideas. The first of these is that of

"eternal change  
Which is the life of Nature."

He loves to stand apart, watching with a remote sympathy the continual flux of things. This is seen in **Bryant's** "The Crowded Street," and on a larger scale **Favorite Ideas** in "The Ages," "The Past," and the "Hymn to the North Star." The poems on death consider this most momentous change that comes to man as part of the great movement of nature. It is death in its relation to the body rather than to the soul that he treats, but as he approaches the subject it is never repulsive. As death is universal, so it is to be viewed calmly and bravely; this is the teaching first stated in "Thanatopsis," and many times repeated. The other favorite idea of the poems is love of nature. Bryant's feeling toward nature was that of a healthy man who enjoyed it for its own sake, without asking why. He does not philosophize over it like Wordsworth, or describe it microscopically like Tennyson, or sentimentalize over it like Burns. If he uses it to point a moral it is by the obvious device of a comparison, as in "The West Wind," "The Hymn to the North Star," "A Summer Ramble," and "To the Fringed Gentian." Of all aspects of nature he enjoyed best the wild forest as he knew it in boyhood in western Massachusetts. The Italian landscape did not satisfy him because man had changed

nature too much. He says little of the mountains, and little of the sea, though for the last thirty-five years of his life he over-looked it from his country home. His poems to particular flowers treat common favorites without previous poetical associations, such as the yellow violet, the painted cup, and the fringed gentian. His melancholy shows itself in his poems on autumn, and the peculiar coldness of his temperament is seen in his fondness for winter. One of his best love-songs has a winter setting, and "The Little People of the Snow," the best of his narrative poems, is a unique story of the fairies of the cold who revel among the frost-flowers. Naturally, the best of his poems are those that connect both of his favorite ideas—the love of nature and the thought of death as change. These ideas are sometimes strangely combined, as in "June," where the beautiful month appeals to the author as a pleasant time in which to be buried.

The poems that deal with subjects other than those just mentioned are likely to be good, but not remarkable. The author's taste did not often fail him except when he attempted humor, and he rarely wrote anything that was flat. Even the *Homer* is a work of some merit. When he began the translation nearly sixty years had elapsed since he received his scanty college training in Greek, and he could have given little time to the language afterward. He was the coldest of poets. He is said to have held with Poe that a long poem is an impossibility; and, as has been remarked, he did not succeed well in telling a story. Such a man could not make a very scholarly or a very popular translation of the most glowing and rapid of epic poets. His version has, however, dignity, and often ease, and is probably more nearly literal than any other verse translation.

Although Bryant often shows quiet melancholy, he can hardly be accused of sentimentality. Most of the poems that

approach nearest to sentimentalism, like "Consumption" and "The Death of the Flowers," have a personal reference. Didacticism seemed natural to him, yet he rarely wrote with a didactic purpose. The moral is almost always given at the end of a poem, in a few lines that though skillfully added might often be omitted without much loss. Indeed, the closing lines of "Thanatopsis" were not written until some years after the rest of the poem had been published; and the same might conceivably be true of "The West Wind," the "Hymn to the North Star," "A Forest Hymn," and many others, among them even "To a Waterfowl."

Bryant was the first American poet to attain lasting fame, as Irving was the first essayist, and Cooper the first novelist.

**Bryant's Rank** Unlike these men, he did not achieve an international reputation. The volume of poems issued in 1832 was reprinted in England through the instrumentality of Irving, but it attracted little attention, and its author never became widely known abroad. He was, however, for at least twenty-five years, the leading poet of America, and for a much longer time he had no rival in his own section of the country. This fact gave him a prestige which may have influence on his reputation, even to-day. But though he has perhaps been overrated he fully deserves a place among the greater American poets. No American has equalled him in the expression of his few favorite ideas; and these, while they are not of the sort to arouse enthusiasm, appeal strongly to most persons at some period of their lives. Though his manner is cold, his diction is always clear and his verse flawless; and occasionally, as in the line which so impressed Hartley Coleridge and Matthew Arnold,

"The desert and illimitable air,"

there is a touch of inspiration. He is the least of the trio of the greater Knickerbockers, but he may live longest of them all.

The lesser New York writers are all far inferior to the three already discussed, yet several of them produced single works that are still well known; and they showed forth fully as much as their superiors the characteristics of national life. Most of them were so versatile, or rather attempted so many things, that no classification according to forms of composition is practicable.

**Lesser New  
York Writers**

Among the writers who link this period to the preceding is William Dunlap, whose dramas have already been noticed.

**William Dunlap** After 1800 his literary activities were mostly those of an historian and a biographer. He wrote the lives of George Frederick Cooke, the actor, and Charles Brockden Brown, a *History of the American Theatre* and a *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*. All these are full of facts, but are formless and without merit of style. Dunlap was, however, a forceful and influential man among literary men, the friend of most of the newer authors, as he had been the friend of Charles Brockden Brown. The *History of the American Theatre* is dedicated to Cooper.

James Kirke Paulding (1778-1860), already mentioned as a collaborator with Irving in *Salmagundi*, was a peculiar specimen of Americanism. His family originally had some property, but his father expended it by an act of patriotism during the Revolution, and was never reimbursed. The son was born in Dutchess County, New York, and grew up with little schooling and without going five miles from home until he was eighteen or nineteen years of age. He then secured a business clerkship in New York, where his sister had married William Irving. The Irvings introduced the green country boy to their literary friends, who at first took him up as the butt of their jokes. In time he became more sophisticated

**James Kirke  
Paulding**



and was able to do his full share in *Salmagundi*. This seems to have been his first attempt at authorship. In 1812 he brought out *John Bull and Brother Jonathan*, a political satire modeled on Arbuthnot, and he continued writing until 1849. *The Lay of the Scottish Fiddle* is a parody on Scott. *The Backwoodsman* is a poem descriptive of frontier life. *Koningsmarke*, *the Long Finne*, *The Dutchman's Fireside*, and *Westward Ho* are novels. Among his other works are a play, *The Lion of the West*, a second series of *Salmagundi*, and *Merry Tales of the three Wise Men of Gotham*—the last a heterogeneous satire on the theory of human perfectibility, the common law, and phrenology. The author's temper was satiric, and even his novels were "complicated"—to use his own phrase—by irreverent burlesques of other authors. He seems always to have retained the attitude of the countryman in the city, who feels that he must ridicule everything he sees in order not to be ridiculed himself. When not engaged in political satire Paulding preferred to write of American frontier and country life. The scene of *The Dutchman's Fireside* is laid near Albany before the Revolution, that of *Koningsmarke* in New Jersey, and that of *Westward Ho* in Virginia and Kentucky. The author has Cooper's fondness for the woods and the wilderness, but little of Cooper's power of description. In some of his lighter sketches he is like a crude and clumsy Irving, and might be suspected of imitation if he had not shown the same qualities before the *Sketch Book* was published.

Among the lesser poets of New York two stand out with especial prominence. Of these, the younger, Joseph Rodman Drake (1795-1820), did not live to fulfill his early promise. He is said to have been a descendant of the Pilgrims, but was born in New York. Both his parents died when he was young and he was forced to support himself. He first engaged in busi-

Joseph Rodman  
Drake

ness, then studied medicine, and afterward kept a drug store and practiced his profession. He married a woman of some means and was able to go abroad for his health, but it was useless, and he died of consumption at the age of twenty-five. His lesser poems show the influence of Moore and occasionally of Wordsworth. His one important work is "The Culprit Fay," a narrative and descriptive poem in which he tried to acclimate fairies to the region of the Hudson. The story is that of a fay who has sinned by loving a mortal maiden and must do penance. Some of the situations are ingenious rather than imaginative, but there is music in the verse, and there are some truly poetic descriptions. It was the best work of the kind that had so far been done in America, with the possible exception of one or two poems by Freneau. Unfortunately Drake was anxious for the praise that was being bestowed so freely on rapid work, and he prefixed to "The Culprit Fay" an ingenious note so worded as to give the impression, without stating the fact, that the poem was written in three days.

Fitzgreene Halleck (1790-1867), the close friend and literary partner of Drake, was one of the New Englanders who were attracted by the commercial prosperity of New York. He was born in Connecticut, where he taught school and clerked in a store until he was twenty-one years of age. He then secured a position in a New York counting-house, and held this and a similar clerkship with John Jacob Astor during his active career. Shortly after he went to New York he met Drake. According to tradition the latter was captivated by Halleck's affected remark that it "would be heaven to lounge upon the rainbow and read Tom Campbell," and the two became at once fast friends. In 1819 they united to write the "Croaker Papers," a series of light and often satirical verses on topics of the time, published anonymously in the "Evening Post." Some

**Fitzgreene  
Halleck**

of the papers are clever, but the great stir they made must have been due to the novelty of the plan and to the fact that the secret of authorship was so well kept.

As time went on Halleck assumed the air of a blasé bachelor, and became a well-known figure in literary and social circles. His verse was influenced chiefly by Campbell, and later by Byron. Among the tricks that he acquired from the latter was that of mixing in the same poem serious imaginative passages and burlesque. This is seen in "Fanny," "Alnwick Castle," "Connecticut," and other poems. His longest poem, "Fanny," published in 1819, is often called an imitation of Don Juan, but the dates are so close together as to make this doubtful. In this, and in some poems of the Alnwick Castle volume of 1827, are fine passages which earned for the author a temporary reputation as one of the few greater American poets. In later years he wrote little. Though probably second only to Bryant of the Knickerbocker poets, he is now remembered for little more than "Marco Bozzaris," and one stanza of his tribute to Drake:

Green be the turf above thee,  
Friend of my better days!  
None knew thee but to love thee,  
Nor named thee but to praise.

The names of three New York writers are preserved each by a single song. John Howard Payne (1792-1852), author of "Home, Sweet Home," was born in New York city, but spent part of his boyhood in Boston. He early showed an interest in the theatre, which his Puritan relatives tried in vain to suppress. He edited a dramatic paper at the age of thirteen and at eighteen went on the stage. During much of his life he was connected with the theatre in Europe and America, sometimes as actor, but more frequently as author and adapter of plays.

### Halleck's Poems

### Three Song-Writers

For some time he resided in Paris and translated successful French plays for the London managers. His best drama, *Brutus, or the Fall of Tarquin*, was not a direct adaptation, though he owns his indebtedness to other authors who had written on the same theme. It is a blank-verse tragedy with some striking situations, and was long in the répertoires of the greatest tragedians of England and America. "Home, Sweet Home" occurs in *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*, a sentimental production which is remarkable for nothing else. Payne died at Tunis, where he was United States consul, and after many years his body was brought back for interment in his native country. Samuel Woodworth (1785-1842), born in Massachusetts and long a New York editor, wrote plays, a novel, and many short poems, most of them sentimental. The only one that survives is "The Old Oaken Bucket," written in 1817. George P. Morris (1802-1864) was born in Philadelphia, but lived almost his entire life in New York. His editorial career, extending from 1823 to 1864, was divided between the "New York Mirror" and the "Home Journal," both light literary journals which reflect in an interesting way the transient taste of the country. Morris was long noted as the most successful American writer of songs. Of these only "Woodman, Spare that Tree" is now sung. Others, such as "Near the Lake where drooped the Willow," "We were Boys together," and "My Mother's Bible," are said to have been immensely popular in their day. Payne, Woodworth, and Morris all show the influence of the wave of sentimentalism that was sweeping over both England and America about 1820-1830.

Among the less important Knickerbocker writers were Gulian C. Verplanck (1786-1870) and Robert C. Sands (1799-1832), who have been mentioned as collaborators with Bryant in the "Talisman." Verplanck was a descendant of one of the wealthy old Dutch families of New York, and was long

prominent in social, literary, and political life. His contributions to the "Talisman," which are typical of his lighter work, include popular historical sketches, a romantic tale or two, and a humorous skit, "Peregrinations of Petrus Mudd." In his serious work he is much heavier than Irving, but aims to produce the same effects. His humor, which he employed in several political satires, approaches burlesque. Verplanck was the author of serious essays and orations on literary matters and edited the works of Shakespeare. He was the kind of man who gives weight and character to a literary set, but his own writings are now of little value. Robert C. Sands had a part in several literary undertakings besides the "Talisman" during his short life of thirty-three years. While a student at Columbia college he formed a sort of literary partnership with James W. Eastburn (1797-1819), a young divinity student of much promise who died at a still earlier age than Sands. Together they started two periodicals, and later began a metrical translation of the Psalms and *Yamoyden*, a narrative poem with an Indian hero. The latter was finished by Sands after his friend's death. Later Sands did editorial work on several periodicals and contributed, with Miss Sedgwick and others, to the *Tales of Glauber Spa*. His prose, much of which dates from the later years of his life, is somewhat Irvingesque. His verse is notable for the wide range of influence that it shows in both spirit and form. An early poem, "The Bridal of Vaumond," is in the measure of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," but has a Byronic motive. The introduction to *Yamoyden* is in the Spenserian stanza, and the body of the poem, which is in octosyllabics, contains echoes of Milton's minor poems, Scott, Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Sands was also familiar with the poets of Southern Europe and made several translations from their works.

**Minor New  
York Writers**



## II. WRITERS OF NEW ENGLAND

During the supremacy of the Knickerbocker school in American literature the most popular, though not the ablest group of New England writers, were the successors of the Hartford Wits in Connecticut. These continued the milder traditions of their predecessors, but lacked their fire and enthusiasm. They were especially susceptible to the sentimental influence seen in the works of the lesser New York poets, and their work was almost all obviously moral and didactic. The most prominent of the group were Mrs. Sigourney, Percival, and Goodrich.

**Connecticut  
Writers**

Lydia Huntley Sigourney (1791-1865) was probably the most representative of the Connecticut writers. Before her marriage she taught "select" classes of young ladies; she was a model wife and mother; and after her husband lost his property she contributed by her pen to the support of the family. Her biographer tells with pride that she composed or aided in the composition of forty-six volumes, "besides more than 2,000 articles in prose and verse, contributed to nearly 300 periodicals." Her first volume, aptly called *Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse*, published over her maiden name in 1815, was composed largely of exercises written for her class of young ladies. Other representative titles of her books are *Olive Buds*, *Letters to Mothers*, *Whisper to a Bride*. Her first collection of poems appeared in 1827, and others followed at short intervals. Many of these volumes were issued as gift books, with fine paper, delicate binding, and the characteristic steel engravings of ninety years ago. Mrs. Sigourney was early styled "The American Mrs. Hemans," and the characterization was fully as happy as most such nicknames. She dealt especially with the simpler domestic affec-

**Lydia Huntley  
Sigourney**



tions, with the beauty of piety, and the necessity of preparing for death. Her average mediocre work may be illustrated by a stanza from "The Bubble":

Out springs the bubble dazzling bright,  
With ever-changing hues of light,  
And so amid the flowery grass,  
Our gilded years of childhood pass.

James Gates Percival (1795-1856) was known to his contemporaries as one of the greatest American poets, but is now almost forgotten. There is space here neither to trace the details of his shifting career nor to discuss his complex personality. He was born in Connecticut, and was graduated at Yale in 1815. He studied now law, now medicine, taught school in various places, thought of taking holy orders, gave popular lectures on botany, published a miscellany at Charleston, South Carolina, was appointed professor of chemistry at West Point, resigned because of fancied slights to his dignity, did philological work on Webster's dictionary and was state geologist in Connecticut and in Wisconsin. Meanwhile he had time for several unfortunate love affairs, an attempt at suicide, and the production of a large amount of verse. Among his personal traits seem to have been an acute sensitiveness and an extreme though genuine egotism. These peculiarities interfered with his success in life, and made it possible for an essay by Lowell, which is essentially unfair, to shatter whatever remained of his literary reputation.

Percival's versatility shows itself in his poems. These include attempts in almost all conceivable metres, and translations from most known tongues, besides verses in foreign languages. Notwithstanding Lowell's patronizing sneer, Percival had great linguistic attainments and, although he was influenced by some of the bad fashions of his day, considerable taste. He

**James Gates  
Percival**

**Percival's  
Poems**

held, however, the belief that poetry came by inspiration, not by labor, and he never revised. As a result, many fine lines and passages that show genuine poetic feeling and insight are buried amid masses of crude Byronic and other imitative verse. Some of his sonnets and one or two lyrics, such as "The Coral Grove" and "To Seneca Lake," are sufficiently free from blemishes to hold a deserved place in the anthologies. A little search among his works will reveal many beauties, and some touches of real genius, but there are few poems that are worthy of consideration in their entirety. He was one of the most notable victims of the belief in inspiration and hasty composition.

Samuel G. Goodrich (1793-1860) was by birth and temperament a Connecticut Yankee, though after a time he removed his publishing business from Hartford to Boston. As publisher, and as editor of his literary annual "The Token," he aided in introducing to the public several literary men, notably Hawthorne. He was himself the author of the original Peter Parley books, though later works issued under this name were written by others. The Peter Parley books aimed to instruct the young in history, geography, and many other subjects by introducing edifying facts in a fictitious narrative. This sugar-coating of knowledge was clumsily done, but the plan just suited the temper of the time, and the series had a great sale, both in America and in England.

To the list of Connecticut poets may be added the name of James A. Hillhouse (1789-1841), of New Haven, a Yale graduate of the class of 1808. His first publication, a Phi Beta Kappa poem entitled "The Judgment, a Vision," is commonplace, and suffers by comparison with Wigglesworth's "Day of Doom." "Hadad," a drama, is his most ambitious work. The theme is the old one, based on a story in the Apoc-

**Samuel G.  
Goodrich**

**Minor  
Connecticut  
Writers**

rypha, of a maiden with a demon lover. The plot is crude, and the verse is often turgid with crowded and mixed imagery, but there are occasional passages of strangely powerful blank verse. J. G. C. Brainard (1796-1828) was another Connecticut poet. He was a born journalist, with a journalist's facility of expression, and the defects that arose from hurried composition are less obvious in his work than in that of Percival, though his genius was very much less than Percival's. His friend Goodrich tells with much enjoyment that his once famous lines on Niagara were composed in a few minutes with the printers calling for copy, though the subject was entirely unpremeditated, and the author had never seen the Falls. His friends felt that he gave promise of great attainment, but he died of consumption at the age of thirty-two.

Literary traditions in Boston during the early years of the nineteenth century were conserved chiefly by a group of young professional men, most of whom were members of a social and literary association known as the Anthology Club. From 1803 to 1811 they published the "Monthly Anthology," and they were the chief contributors to the "North American Review" when it was founded in 1815. The first editor of the "North American Review" was William Tudor, and among his associates were John Quincy Adams, Jared Sparks, Joseph Story, William Ellery Channing, George Ticknor, Edward Everett, Alexander H. Everett, Richard Henry Dana, Washington Allston, J. S. J. Gardiner, E. T. Channing, and others. The names of many of these men are remembered, though in some cases not solely because of the excellence of their literary work. Only two or three need be considered here.

William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) takes rank rather as a divine than as a man of letters, yet he had more of the literary gift than most of his contemporaries. Several admirable reviews and miscellaneous essays dating from the

**Boston Writers:  
The Anthology  
Club**

time of the Anthology Club show what he might have achieved if he had devoted himself to pure literature. Even at this early time, however, his chief interest was in theological and religious questions. \* A little later he found himself, though against his will, the recognized leader of the liberal forces in the great controversy between the Unitarians and the orthodox Congregationalists; and still later he was involved in the anti-slavery agitation. His religious and sociological writings show the clearness of his thought and the lucidity and charm of his style, but the fact that they deal with unattractive subjects, and that they are chiefly claimed and circulated by a single sect, prevents them from being widely read.

**William Ellery  
Channing**

The ablest writer of this group, with the possible exception of Channing, was Richard Henry Dana (1787-1879). He

**Richard Henry  
Dana**

was a native of Cambridge, and entered Harvard with the class of 1808, but was dismissed on account of some offence, and studied law. His connection with the Anthology Club dates from 1814, and he was for a time associated with Edward T. Channing in the editorship of the "North American Review." When Channing resigned Dana failed of promotion to the editorship because he was too unpopular. Indeed, certain personal peculiarities interfered not only with the smoothness of his personal relations with other men, but to some extent with the excellence of his writings. He was given to discussing himself and his works with great self-complacency, and he had too little deference for well-established literary canons. Besides reviews and miscellaneous essays he wrote poems and prose tales. Some of these he published in "The Idle Man," a miscellany which he issued in 1821-2. In the more powerful stories, such as "Paul Felton" and "Tom Thornton," he shows the influence, though no direct imitation, of Charles Brockden Brown. Though these exhibit some lapses in taste, they are

better in their way than anything else of the kind between Brown and Poe.

Verse-making seems to have been a late diversion for Dana. His first poem, "The Dying Raven," was published in "The New York Review" in 1825, when the author was thirty-eight years of age. Once started, he wrote freely, and in 1827 issued a volume of poems which won some praise from "Blackwood's." Another volume appeared in 1833. Dana's longest poem, "The Buccaneer," in which a cruel pirate suffers for his misdeeds through the agency of a spectral horse, is grotesque in conception, but contains many good passages, as well as many examples of pathos suggestive of Crabbe. The author had a genuine appreciation of nature, and his best verse is that in which this is shown. "The Little Beach-Bird" is probably his best known poem.

Washington Allston (1779-1843), one of the greatest of early American painters, was a native of South Carolina, but removed to Rhode Island in early boyhood. He was graduated from Harvard, and studied art abroad until 1809, when he opened a studio in Boston. By his first marriage he was connected with the Channings and by his second with the Danas, and was thus thrown into close association with the Anthology set. In 1813 he published in London *The Sylphs of the Seasons and other Poems*, and by 1822 he had written *Monaldi*, a romance, which was not, however, printed until nearly twenty years later. He had the eye and the ear of an artist, and his serious poems show delicate beauties, but no great strength. Occasionally, as in "Rosalie," his metrical effects suggest those of Poe's lighter melodies. In "The Paint King" he attempts a burlesque on Scott. *Monaldi* is a melodramatic story of revenge and insanity, with a conventional Italian setting. The best passages in the book are one or two short descriptions

#### Dana's Poems

#### Washington Allston



of nature. At the time when Allston was writing, America needed the artist influence, and his fine personality as well as his talent enabled him to do his contemporaries much good; but his work is not of the sort to live for its own merits.

Two members of the Anthology Club, George Ticknor (1791-1871) and Edward Everett (1794-1865), should be

**George Ticknor  
and Edward  
Everett**

remembered as among the first Americans to study at German universities and to introduce at Harvard college those German methods that revolutionized higher education in America. Ticknor served as professor of foreign languages at Harvard, again studied abroad, and in 1849 published a scholarly history of Spanish literature. Everett during his long and busy career was at different times pastor of the Brattle street church in Boston, professor of Greek at Harvard, president of Harvard, member of Congress and of the senate, minister to England, secretary of state, and candidate for the vice-presidency. He was prolific of both magazine articles and orations, his collected works containing about one hundred and seventy-five of the latter. In his day he was frequently named as the greatest American orator. His addresses, though he says he has "applied the pruning knife freely to the style," are even in their amended form the best illustration of the high-flown manner which was the fashion in the early years of the nineteenth century. They abound in classical allusions, and are modelled, as the author apologetically says, on Johnson, Gibbon, and Burke.

John Quincy Adams (1767-1848), who has been mentioned as a member of the Anthology Club in Boston, is known rather

**Minor  
Massachusetts  
Writers**

as a statesman than as a literary man, though just before he was elected to the presidency of the United States he filled the chair of *belles lettres* at Harvard. Joseph Story (1779-1845), another member of the Anthology Club, was a



graduate of Harvard with the class of 1798. He wrote verses in his earlier years, and was later a politician, a judge, a professor in the Harvard law school, and the author of many able treatises on law. A contemporary of these men, though not exactly of their set, was Charles Sprague (1791-1875), a native of Boston and for nearly half a century a banker in that city. He wrote prize prologues for various theatres, and a didactic poem, "Curiosity," which he delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard. This piece, which is often spoken of as his best, is the usual metrical essay in the heroic couplet, with obvious echoes of Pope. As a whole it is smooth, but lacks striking or quotable passages. Sprague was an orator of the florid type. A sounding passage on "The American Indian," from his Fourth of July oration delivered in 1825, was a favorite school declamation until comparatively recent years. Another old-fashioned poet was John Pierpont (1785-1866), a native of Connecticut and a graduate of Yale, for many years pastor of the Hollis Street Church, Boston. He was a great traveller for his day, visiting the Holy Land. He was also an ardent temperance and antislavery reformer, and some of his enthusiasms are reflected in his verse. *The Airs of Palestine* was published in 1816 and reissued with some additions in 1840. The best known of his occasional poems is "Warren's Address," written for the banquet at the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill monument, and beginning "Stand! the ground's your own, my braves." Lucius M. Sargent (1786-1867) was another Boston poet and reformer. His chief interests were in the temperance movement. Some of his temperance tales, which to a later taste seem woefully commonplace, were widely read, and it is said that one of them passed through one hundred and thirty editions. Henry Cogswell Knight (1788-1835), a native of Massachusetts and a graduate of Brown University with the class of 1812, published in 1809 *The Cypriad*, a collec-

tion of youthful verses, in 1815 *The Broken Harp*, and 1821 *Poems*. His work is a strange mixture, occasionally poetic, sometimes witty, but often flat and unintentionally ludicrous. As a versifier he echoes every poet that he reads, and his work is perhaps most notable for the fact that at an early date he shows so strongly the influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge. His *Letters from the South*, published over the signature of Arthur Singleton, are studiously whimsical.

New Englanders were especially susceptible to the pious and didactic sentimentality which was prevalent during the early nineteenth century, and several Boston women

**Sentimentality  
—Women  
Writers**

vied with the Connecticut authors in showing this quality. Their works are now of value only as an expression of the spirit of the time.

Sarah Wentworth Morton (1759-1846), who as early as 1790 had published *Ouabi*, an Indian tale, in verse, brought out in 1823 a miscellany entitled *My Mind and its Thoughts*. Some of the prose "thoughts" are sufficiently "Orphic" in form to suggest the later transcendentalists. The verse is in the form of "Odes" and "Lines" to Time, Memory, and other abstractions. Hannah F. Gould (1789-1865), the daughter of the principal of the Boston Latin school, wrote much for periodicals, and published several volumes of verse. Her poems are all short, and bear such suggestive titles as "The Empty Bird's Nest," "The Slave Mother," "To the Moonbeams," "The Pebble and the Acorn." The early work of Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880) also shows much sentimentality and is obviously didactic. *Hobomok*, her first novel, was published in 1821. *The Rebels* followed the next year. Both have historical American settings. More representative are some early writings for children. In 1831 she became interested in the antislavery movement through the influence of Garrison, and from that time she devoted herself to this and kindred reforms.

Marie Gowen Brooks (1795-1845), whom Southey named "Maria del Occidente," and characterized as "the most impassioned and imaginative of all poetesses,"  
**Marie Gowen Brooks** had a varied career. Her father died when she was a child, leaving her almost penniless.

She was educated by Mr. Brooks, a wealthy Boston merchant, who married her, but soon afterward lost his property, and then died. The young widow, who had taken to writing verses "for consolation," went to Cuba, and afterward to England. Her first volume, *Judith, Esther and other Poems*, was published in 1820. The first canto of *Zophiel, or The Bride of Seven*, was written in Cuba, and the rest under Southey's direction in England. *Idomen*, which appeared in 1843, was autobiographical. Mrs. Brooks's earliest verses were echoes of the English poets, especially those of the seventeenth century. *Zophiel*, an Eastern tale, reminds us of the brief popularity that Byron, Moore, and others gave to oriental subjects. It tells again the story of a maiden whose suitors were slain one after another by her demon lover. The versification is harsh, though many passages show the impassioned quality which Southey praised.

Catherine M. Sedgwick (1789-1867), a prolific writer of fiction and miscellaneous works, was a somewhat more sane and important authoress. She was born in  
**Catherine M. Sedgwick** Stockbridge and, like other residents of western Massachusetts, had some associations with the New York literary set. In 1832 she contributed with Bryant and others to a miscellany, *The Tales of Glauber Spa*. For fifty years she conducted a school for young ladies; and her novels, *Hope Leslie*, *The Linwoods*, and others, have the moral and educational qualities to be expected in the work of a preceptress, though they are by no means so weak as the usual "moral tales." Her patriotism was especially intense. *The Linwoods*, her latest and probably her best novel, is a tale

of the Revolutionary war. In this she ventured to introduce Washington among the characters, though she confesses in the preface that when mentioning his name "she has felt a sentiment resembling the awe of the pious Israelite when he approached the ark of the Lord." The plot is a complicated one, involving all the fortunes of both love and war, and ends with strict poetical justice done to all parties.

As was seen in the last chapter, the tendency to write broad burlesque and vituperative satire culminated about the beginning of the century, and the Hartford Wits and Mathew Carey did some of their most offensive work just after 1800. As time went on the less dignified and more objectionable writings of this sort came to be recognized at their true value, and though they continued to be written and published they need not be noticed here. The satires of Thomas Green Fessenden (1771-1837) are still faintly remembered. Fessenden was born in New Hampshire, took his degree at Dartmouth, and went to England on a business enterprise. Here he became interested in Perkins's metallic tractors, a cure-all extensively advertised, and in 1803 attacked physicians who opposed their use in *Terrible Tractoration*, by Christopher Caustic, M.D. This is in four-line stanzas of Hudibrastic verse, and is accompanied by voluminous footnotes, in some of which there is great show of scientific knowledge. The verse itself seems far from brilliant, but the public, which always enjoys an attack on doctors or preachers, welcomed the poem, and it was generally read and quoted in England and America. In 1806, after his return from England, Fessenden published *Democracy Unveiled*, a violent attack on the Democrats, whom he designates as

The scum—the scandal of the age,  
A blot on human nature's page.

He is especially severe on Jefferson, and a relatively small

number of Hudibrastic verses serve as an excuse for footnotes in which are repeated the worst of the charges against Jefferson's public and private character. Later, Fessenden published *Pills, Poetical, Political, and Philosophical*. A satirist of a different sort was Tabitha Tenney (1762-1837), a native of Exeter, New Hampshire, who published *Female Quixotism* in 1807. In this work Don Quixote and Sancho Panza are burlesqued in the heroine and her maid, whose adventures are varied and some of them rather boisterous.

One of the most picturesque of New England literary characters was John Neal (1793-1876), who was born in Portland, Maine. His *Wandering Recollections of a somewhat busy Life*, written when he was about seventy-five years of age, recounts in a breezy manner the varied experiences of an indefatigable Yankee. At different times he was in business, as clerk and proprietor in several cities, teacher of penmanship, lawyer, editor, and man of letters. His first story, *Keep Cool*, in ridicule of duelling, was published in 1817, and his poem, "The Battle of Niagara," in 1818. These were followed in the next fifteen years by seven other novels and some miscellaneous work. Meanwhile he had gone to England, and with the assurance of a self-educated down-easter had made himself known to literary men, and become a contributor to "Blackwood's" and a protégé of Jeremy Bentham. After five years he returned to America, to resume the practice of law and continue literary work. Neal exemplifies in an exaggerated degree most of the amusing characteristics that have been noticed in his contemporaries. He showed his patriotic wish for literary independence by rejoicing that he did not write "what the English themselves call English." In his review of American Literature in "Blackwood's" he complacently wrote of his own poems: "Abounding throughout in absurdity, intemperance, affectation, extravagance—with continual but

**Maine—John  
Neal**

involuntary imitation: yet, nevertheless, containing altogether more sincere poetry, more exalted, *original*, pure poetry, than *all* the works of *all* the other authors that have ever appeared in America." He published the dates at which he began and ended each of his novels, and called attention to the rapidity of composition—"four English volumes in *thirty-six* days." Most of his works are turgid and bombastic, others show traces of sentimentality. Yet, in spite of his ridiculous extravagance of thought and expression, Neal is far more than an epitome of the faults of American authors. There is much imagination and grace in some of his poems, and even the hastily written novels often hold the attention by their originality of conception and vividness of portrayal. All in all, Neal and his works are among the most interesting literary curiosities of the time.

### III. WRITERS OF PHILADELPHIA; THE SOUTH; THE WEST

At the opening of the century Philadelphia was the chief city of the country, and a centre for much of what was called "polite letters;" but among the great number of creditable writers there were few whose works are now even faintly remembered. For the first decade of the century the most prominent literary figure was perhaps Joseph Dennie (1768-1812). He was a native of Boston and a graduate of Harvard, and before he removed to Philadelphia in a political capacity in 1799 had been a newspaper editor in New England. From 1801 until his death he conducted the "Portfolio" under the name of "Oliver Oldschool." This journal contained letters of travel, literary and dramatic criticism, original and selected poetry, and miscellaneous essays, after the manner of the better eighteenth century magazines. In dress, deportment, and literary style Dennie affected the fashions implied by his pen-name. His prose was formal and a trifle oracular, and

Philadelphia—  
Joseph Dennie



his tastes were in general those of the eighteenth century, though in an early number of the "Portfolio" he quoted from the *Lyrical Ballads* and gave them high praise. As "The Lay Preacher" he began in his New Hampshire newspaper and continued in the "Portfolio" a series of "sermons"—short essays each prefixed with a text of Scripture.

Charles Jared Ingersoll (1782-1862), a Pennsylvania lawyer and politician, wrote poems, a tragedy, a history of the

**Charles Jared  
Ingersoll**

War of 1812, and his *Recollections*; but was best known for *Inchiquin the Jesuit's Letters*.

These were published in 1810 at a time when America was greatly irritated by the unfavorable accounts written by foreign travellers in the United States, and pretended to give the observations and criticisms of a Jesuit in this country. They were written as if from Washington and vicinity, and contain slight censure and much praise of American customs and institutions. The pretense of foreign authorship ought not to have deceived anyone, and the great interest that the letters aroused can be accounted for only by the excited state of public feeling.

John Blair Linn (1777-1804) was a native of Pennsylvania, but like his more famous brother-in-law, Charles Brockden

**Minor  
Philadelphia  
Writers**

Brown, lived for some time in New York.

When but eighteen years of age he published in the latter city a volume of *Miscellaneous*

*Works* that show promise, and two years later wrote a play, *Bourville Castle*, which was acted with much success. He afterward underwent a change of feeling and became a clergyman, and was settled as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. *Valerian*, a narrative poem with some strong descriptive passages, was published after his death. Joseph Hopkinson (1770-1842), a Philadelphia lawyer, owes his place in literary history only to the authorship of "Hail, Columbia."

The South continued to furnish orators and statesmen, but produced no writers who gave themselves exclusively to literature, and it was only occasionally that a professional man attempted literary composition as a diversion. The only city that could be called a literary center was Baltimore, and Maryland had a larger share of authors than any other Southern state. John Pendleton Kennedy (1795-1870) was a Maryland lawyer who during much of his life was active in politics. His first literary work was contributions to the "Red Book," a fortnightly publication which he and a friend issued at Baltimore in 1818-19. *Swallow Barn*, published in 1832, is a series of sketches of life in lower Virginia, with a slight tale interwoven. *Horseshoe Robinson*, probably the author's most popular work, is a tale of the Revolution. *Rob of the Bowl* is also an historical novel, with the scene laid in the times of the proprietary government in Maryland. In all these works the description of life and manners is faithful and picturesque, and the story is interestingly told.

William Wirt (1772-1834) was also a native of Maryland, but spent most of his life in Virginia and at Washington. He was a lawyer, and held many political positions, but found time for much literary work. His first series of essays, the *Letters of the British Spy*, adopts the old fiction of a packet of letters found in a boardinghouse, and purports to be written from Richmond by an Englishman of rank to a member of parliament. The character of the supposed author is not well maintained, and the letters are really essays dealing with the nature of eloquence, Buffon's theories of geological formation, the need of greater support for higher education in Virginia, and other of the author's favorite topics. After their publication in the Richmond "Argus" in 1803 the letters were collected in book form and went through at least twelve editions. The sketch

**Maryland—  
John P.  
Kennedy**

**Virginia—  
William Wirt**

of "The Blind Preacher" in Letter VI was long a favorite selection. The author shows the influence of Addison, whom he praises extravagantly in one letter, but his manner is heavier and more ornate than that of his model. It is hard to understand the admiration once felt for these papers as specimens of style, but they were long considered prose classics. Two other series of Wirt's essays, *The Rainbow* and *The Old Bachelor*, also went through several editions, and some of his speeches, especially that on the trial of Aaron Burr, were well known. Probably his most popular work was *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, a fascinating biography of the old-fashioned literary type.

Another Maryland writer who should be remembered is Francis Scott Key (1780-1843), the author of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Nothing else in the post-humous collection of his poems is of value. John Shaw (1778-1809), a naval surgeon born in Annapolis, wrote poems which were collected and published after his death. A few of his more pleasing songs survive in the anthologies. Edward Coate Pinkney (1802-1828), son of a prominent Maryland politician, in his short life was an officer in the navy, a member of the bar, a volunteer in the Mexican fight for independence, a professor in the University of Maryland, and an editor. He was a hot-headed youth with a propensity for duelling, and his literary models were Byron and Moore. "Rodolph," his longest poem, is a story of illicit love, bloodshed, remorse, and madness. One or two gallant and sentimental songs are all that survive of his thin volume of poems.

To the southward almost the only author whose name is preserved was Richard Henry Wilde (1789-1847), a native of Ireland who came to Georgia in boyhood, and became a lawyer and a member of congress from that state. After suffering some political disappointments he went to Florence

and devoted himself to the study of Italian literature. His only important published writings are a work on Tasso and a long poem, *Hesperia*, which appeared after his death. His fame has been kept alive by a song from an unfinished opera, published under various titles, but best known by the first line, "My life is like the summer rose."

Georgia—  
Richard Henry  
Wilde

By the opening of the nineteenth century the region west of the Alleghanies was beginning to be important politically and economically, and to have a life of its own.

The West

There were two chief literary centres in the West, Lexington, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio; but several other enterprising towns settled by emigrants from the more intellectual states of the East supported literary periodicals. Lexington was the seat of Transylvania University, which was founded as an academy in the preceding century, and began to confer the bachelor's degree in 1802. The "Medley," the first literary monthly in the West, was established at Lexington in 1803. The commercial importance of Cincinnati gave that city an advantage, and it early became a centre for the publication of both books and periodicals. The intrinsic merit of the western writings was not great, but the spirit shown in various literary enterprises was remarkable. The authors had the taste and the standards of the East, but their isolation, their enthusiasm for the new country, and the feeling of independence natural in frontier life conspired to give western literature a distinction which it lost when improved means of communication bound East and West more closely together.

Among the authors and editors of this region who deserve mention were Timothy Flint and James Hall. Flint (1780-

1840) was born and died in Massachusetts, but spent some years as a missionary in the West, and was for a time editor of a magazine in Cincinnati.

Timothy Flint

His most valuable writings were historical and descriptive, but he also wrote two highly colored romances, and some translations from the French.

James Hall (1793-1868) was born and educated in Philadelphia. He served in the war of 1812, and afterward held a commission in the regular army. In 1818 **James Hall** he resigned from the service to begin the practice of law at Pittsburg. In 1820 he removed to Illinois, where for twelve years he was editor, lawyer, and judge. Among other literary activities he edited the "Western Souvenir," an annual, in 1829, and founded the "Illinois Monthly Magazine" in 1830. Later he removed to Cincinnati, where he continued his editorial labors. His first important work was a series of letters to the "Portfolio," afterward collected as *Letters from the West*. These tell of his first trip down the Ohio. Several volumes, of which *The West, its Soil, Surface, and Productions* is typical, give statistical, historical and miscellaneous information in unusually readable fashion. More purely literary in form are his numerous tales, sketches, and poems. The longest of these is *Harpe's Head, A Legend of Kentucky*. This is a story with much action, and with many vivid descriptions of scenery and manners, first in Virginia and then in Kentucky. Among collections of shorter tales are *Legends of the West, Tales of the Border, The Wilderness and the War-Path*. These all treat almost exclusively of western themes. Hall's poetry, consisting mostly of brief narrative and sentimental pieces, is of little value. Many of his sketches, especially those which are quiet and sentimental, show the influence of Irving; others which are more purely frontier stories and stories of action are suggestive of Cooper. The author was, however, no mere imitator. He had an easy and effective narrative style, and his descriptions of western life and scenery are vivid and sympathetic.

## IV. ORATORS; SCHOLARS

Public speaking continued to be held in high esteem in America, and there were many men in all sections of the country whose eloquence was famous in their day. Some of these have already been mentioned in connection with other kinds of literary activity. The life of Daniel Webster (1782-1852), the greatest of the New England orators, belongs rather to political than to literary history, and is too well known to need more than brief statement here. He was the son of a New Hampshire farmer. In childhood his chief characteristics were ill health and great shyness. Signs of intellectual brilliancy induced his father to send him to Dartmouth college. He studied law and practiced in various towns of Massachusetts, finally in Boston. For the last twenty-five years of his life he was a member of the United States senate, except during two periods when he was secretary of state. The best remembered of his occasional addresses are the oration delivered at the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill monument and the eulogy on Adams and Jefferson. Of the congressional speeches the reply to Hayne, 1830, and the "Seventh of March Speech," 1850, are best known. All of these owe something of their fame to the importance of the occasion, and there are many other speeches in Webster's collected works which, in parts at least, are hardly inferior. Some of his pleas at the bar, notably that at the trial of the murderers of Joseph White in Salem, have a high rank in the oratory of the legal profession. Though weak and shy as a boy, Webster developed into a man of powerful physique, with a dignity and a presence that verged on pomposity. The orations show the quality of the man. They are solid, formal, dignified, and have a touch of the artificial diction of the older classic English and American school. Webster was a man of great

Oratory—  
Daniel Webster



intellectual power, and he could express his ideas with absolute clearness; but the distinctive characteristic of his orations is the combination of weight with the heightened manner. It is proof of real worth that though his style of public speaking has been abandoned in favor of the simpler manner represented by Lincoln, yet his speeches are still read with undiminished admiration.

With the development of national consciousness and greater opportunities for leisurely work it was natural that there should be attempts in the direction of American scholarship. About 1820 a proposal was made to establish an American Academy, with headquarters at New York, but sectional jealousies and the absurdly ambitious nature of the scheme brought about an early failure. A number of more modest learned societies came into existence during the first third of the century. Individual scholars, working independently or in connection with the leading colleges, did much creditable work.

The most frequent attempts at scholarly writing were in the field of history and biography. As the men who had taken part in the Revolution and the organization of the government passed away, there was a natural tendency to write their biographies.

**Biography—**  
**Mason L.**  
**Weems**

Every American with the instincts of an historian prepared his life of Washington, and from this often proceeded to the consideration of other men. Among the earliest was Mason L. Weems (1760?-1825), an eccentric Virginia preacher and book agent, who took advantage of the interest occasioned by Washington's death, and the next year, 1800, brought out a biography. This was exceedingly popular, and is now notorious as the source of the hatchet story and other anecdotes which were apparently manufactured by an author who knew what the public wanted. Weems later wrote lives of Franklin, Marion, and Penn, less famous than his Wash-

ington, but equally unreliable. A very different biography is that by another Virginian, John Marshall (1755-1835). By

**John Marshall** his service as a soldier in the Revolution and his experience in various civil capacities, culminating in his appointment as Chief Justice of the United States, he had acquired a thorough knowledge of the public affairs with which Washington was concerned. The preparation of the *Life* was undertaken at the request of Washington's family, and the five volumes appeared at intervals between 1804 and 1807. It was too early for a judicial and definitive biography, but Marshall's work shows fairness, care, and the power and weight that characterize all his writings. It is still a classic.

Jared Sparks (1789-1866) was a more systematic historical scholar. His early connection with the "North American  
**Jared Sparks** Review" has already been spoken of; later he was professor of history and president at Harvard college. He is remembered chiefly, however, as biographer, and as editor of the writings of Washington, Franklin, and other American statesmen. His practice of omitting passages from the letters that he edited, and of making grammatical and other emendations, is discountenanced by later scholars, but was justified on the theory that nothing should be made public which would lessen reverence for the founders of the nation. His work was carefully done and, except for these emendations, his editions are authentic. He was a worthy predecessor of the great historians that Harvard produced in the next generation.

Among minor historians who deserve brief mention is Isaiah Thomas (1749-1831), a New England editor and publisher, who wrote a *History of Printing in  
**Minor** America*, which is still a standard work.

**Historians** Samuel L. Knapp (1783-1838), an editor and late in life a New York lawyer, published many miscellaneous

writings, and edited a *Library of American History*. To the student of to-day his most interesting work is a series of lectures on American Literature, published in 1829. These are rambling and over-patriotic, but give interesting contemporary estimates of American authors and of literature in general. David Ramsey (1749-1815), a native of Philadelphia, but for most of his life a resident of Charleston, South Carolina, was a surgeon in the Revolutionary war, and afterward the author of *History of the American Revolution*, *Life of George Washington*, and *History of the United States*. While not a great judicial historian his writings carry considerable authority.

Western writers gave the material for history rather than the finished work. Besides Timothy Flint and James Hall, who have already been mentioned, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864) deserves to be remembered. He was born in New York and was first attracted to the West by his interest in geology and mineralogy. Afterward he became an Indian agent and was connected with various government commissions. He published accounts of his travels and many historical and ethnological works relating to the Indians. He was especially interested in Indian folk lore, and prepared two collections of tales, *Algic Researches*, 1839, and *The Myth of Hiawatha and other oral Legends*, 1856. He also wrote a number of rather conventional poems on Indian subjects. The interest of his prose works lies chiefly in the subject matter, but his style is simple and usually adequate.

In natural science America continued to furnish a considerable number of able workers, some of whom wrote with ability. In Philadelphia, where scientific traditions were strong, Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), a prominent physician and man of affairs, published about the opening of the century several works on medical

**Henry Rowe  
Schoolcraft**

**The Scientists**

and miscellaneous subjects. To Philadelphia came the Scotch poet, Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), who turned his attention from verse-making to the preparation of his famous ornithology. In New England perhaps the leading scientist was Benjamin Silliman (1779-1864), long professor at Yale college, and founder of the "American Journal of Science." He combined the true scientific spirit with a faculty for popular exposition, and probably did more than any other man to extend the interest in American science during the first half of the century.

America has some claim to Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford (1753-1814), Tory, soldier of fortune, and physicist.

#### Minor Scientists

He was a native of Massachusetts, though his famous experiments on the nature of heat were conducted in France. Nathaniel Bowditch (1773-1838), in early life a sailor of Salem, published valuable works on applied mathematics and translated Laplace.

Lexicography and the philological sciences were also well represented in New England. Noah Webster, whose earlier

#### The Lexicographers

work was mentioned in the preceding chapter, published a grammar in 1807, and continued his linguistic studies at Amherst, where he aided in founding the college, at New Haven, and in England. The first edition of his famous *Dictionary* was published in 1828. Joseph E. Worcester (1784-1865), a rival lexicographer, was born in New Hampshire, but lived most of his life in Massachusetts. He edited Johnson's *Dictionary* and prepared an abridgment of Webster's before he issued his own in 1830.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CENTRAL PERIOD (1833-1883)

#### I. GENERAL CONDITIONS

It has already been remarked that in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century great changes took place in the political, religious, and social thought of the country, and showed themselves in all forms of literary expression. The perfection of the steam boat and the beginnings of the railroad established the possibility of easy communication between different sections of a great country, and definitely answered the question whether the United States could continue as one nation. At the same time sectional differences increased rather than diminished. The West grew influential in politics, and through its influence the free, energetic, but uncultivated type of man became more conspicuous in public affairs. The development of cotton raising and other industrial changes made the South more dependent than ever before on slave labor. On the other hand the disapproval of slavery, which had long existed and had been steadily growing in the North, was intensified by the spirit of democratic reform which was felt about this time in both Europe and America. As a result North and South found themselves sharply at variance over a matter which had serious moral aspects, and which appealed to the sentiments of both parties. In New England the increased interest in political and sociological questions was accompanied by great changes in philosophy and religious belief. About this time, too, appeared the first published writings of a number of men who were born in the first

decade of the century,\* and who afterward became the most distinguished in American letters.

The men, the problems, and the methods of thought that came into prominence between 1830 and 1840 continued strong in the intellectual life of the nation until at least half a generation after the Civil War. The change at the close of the period was even more gradual than that at the beginning; but between 1880 and 1890 there was a noticeable weakening of the older sectional feeling, and a tendency toward a readjustment of political lines. Younger men came into prominence in literature, and the intellectual prestige of New England was weakened. No one date in the decade is more significant than another of this change. The year 1883 has been chosen to end the period because it rounds out a half century.

One characteristic of the period under discussion was the passage of literary supremacy from New York to New England, or more specifically to Boston and its environs. Irving and Cooper continued to write, but after 1833 they did nothing to increase the reputations that they had already won, and they inspired no successors of their own rank. The Connecticut writers, with their mild conservatism and their devotion to the moral and the commonplace, failed equally to express the spirit of the time. It was the beginning of an era of vigorous mental activity and moral questioning, and it was fitting that the descendants of the most virile of the Puritans should take the lead. The literary ascendancy of Massachusetts was not geographical but racial. The leaders whose names will be mentioned later could almost without exception trace their ancestry back to the emigrants of the early seventeenth century.

Two great movements stirred New England during this

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\* Garrison, Willis, Simms, Emerson, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Whittier, Holmes, and Poe, as well as many of their lesser contemporaries, were born in the years 1803-9 inclusive.



period—transcendentalism and abolitionism. Both were ethical, but one looked toward religion and belief, the other toward politics and action. Both were so strongly reflected in literature that it will be convenient to group together the authors who were especially concerned with each.

**Two Great  
Movements**

## II. THE NEW ENGLAND TRANSCENDENTALISTS

The term “transcendentalist” was originally a nickname applied to the enthusiastic devotees of the idealistic philosophy; and transcendentalism has never been better defined than by Emerson when he said that it was idealism as it appeared in New England about 1840. A more exact definition is impossible, for New England transcendentalism was not a system capable of formulation, and the transcendentalists agreed only in spirit, not in belief. Idealism in New England was not new. Though not definitely recognized and called by name, it was always strong in Puritanism. The revolution by which, in the preceding period, Harvard college and most of the older New England churches had become Unitarian was largely an intellectual movement. Its great achievement was the establishment of the right of free thought. Transcendentalism in one of its aspects was the assertion, under the new conditions of freedom, of the idealism that survived from the old faith. The form of this assertion was modified by the formulated idealistic philosophy of Kant and other Germans. At first, however, the German language was almost unknown, and German thinkers were studied through the interpretations of Coleridge, Carlyle, and the French writers.

**Transcenden-  
talism Was  
Idealism**

As transcendentalism was not a system, perhaps no two of the so-called transcendentalists believed exactly the same. They agreed, however, in denying the postulate of Locke that the mind of a child is like a sheet of blank paper on

which knowledge is written only by experience. They maintained, on the contrary, that every man has certain ideas, like, for example, those of right and wrong, which are innate, which *transcend* experience, and which may be incapable of intellectual proof. This belief implies a close relation between every individual and the source of all wisdom, and carries as a corollary that in the domain of these innate ideas it is necessary only to look earnestly within one's self to learn the truth. It was the absurd and unphilosophical application of this theory that did most to bring transcendentalism into disrepute. Into the transcendental camp rushed fanatics who looked within themselves and found the revelation that it was sinful to eat potatoes, or to wear clothing of a certain cut, or perhaps to wear any clothing at all. These absurdities are even yet associated with the word transcendentalism; but the transcendentalists were as a whole sensible people, who did valuable service in helping to preserve the idealism that has always been a marked American characteristic.

With the development of idealism went other tendencies not philosophical which had their influence on transcendentalism. The descendants of the Puritans were at last breaking loose from traditions of all sorts, and beginning the period of investigation and activity that Professor Wendell aptly calls the "renaissance" of New England. The college curriculum was broadened by increasing the attention given to "*belles lettres*"—the customary academic designation for courses in literature—and by the introduction of modern languages. Once the exploration of unfamiliar fields was begun, enthusiasts rushed everywhere—into the medieval poets and the oriental mystics. So sudden was this movement and so vast were the regions just discovered that at first there was no scholarly thoroughness, and no true appreciation of values.

### Transcendentalist Beliefs

### The "Renaissance" of New England

To know a poet's name and a few translated quotations from his works was justification for mentioning him in terms of familiarity. At the same time with these excursions into literature there was a sudden introduction of the other arts, attended often with the same strange judgments as to values.

The nearest approach to an organization of the transcendentalists was an informal association sometimes spoken of as the Symposium, and by outsiders as the Transcendental Club. Among the chief members were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Amos Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, F. H. Hedge, James Freeman Clarke, C. A. Bartol, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Theodore Parker, W. H. Channing, J. S. Dwight, and Jones Very. Brownson, Bancroft, Cranch, and others were occasional attendants. Meetings were first held in 1836, and continued for some time at irregular intervals.

Among the tangible results of the transcendental movement were the "Dial" and the Brook Farm Community.

The "Dial" was a quarterly published from 1840 to 1844 by the more enthusiastic devotees of the new philosophy. It was edited at first by Margaret Fuller and afterward by Emerson. Those who have access to its now rare files will find it the best illustration of the aspirations of the transcendentalists and of some of their chief follies.

The Brook Farm Settlement was a mildly communistic experiment at West Roxbury, near Boston, between 1841 and 1847. Its chief promoter was George Ripley,

The Brook Farm Community and among his coadjutors were Hawthorne and Charles A. Dana. George William Curtis was a resident, though not a stockholder.

Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Horace Greeley, and others were interested in the plan and gave it qualified endorsement,

though they regarded it as impracticable and declined to become members. The ideas that underlay the experiment were the dignity of labor, the desirability of living close to nature, and the advantage of mutual helpfulness. The plan, especially at first, was not in any way radical, and aimed at no revolution in the social structure. A company was organized and investors took stock as in any other business concern. Residents were to do a certain share of labor or pay for their board. Plans were made to conduct a school and in other ways to supplement the income from the farm. Families were to preserve their identity and every member was to retain full control of himself and his property. After a time the community became influenced by the more radical ideas of Fourier and lost something of its early simplicity. This may have hastened the inevitable dissolution of the association, as did a serious loss by fire in the spring of 1846. Though the fame of the community is due as much to its picturesqueness as to its importance, it is a significant illustration of the way in which idealistic Yankees set about reforming the world.

The greatest and the most representative of the transcendentalists, and the oldest of the greater New England men of letters, was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882).

**Ralph Waldo  
Emerson**

He was born in Boston, the descendant of long lines of clergymen. His father was pastor of the First Church of Boston, which had become Unitarian. The elder Emerson died in 1811, leaving his wife and five small children dependent upon themselves and the aid of friends. Expenditures for food and clothing were minimized to provide means for education. Pen pictures of Waldo as a "spiritual looking boy" who never smiled and never indulged in boy's play are somewhat painful, and it would be pleasant to believe them the imaginings of later admirers. He attended the Boston Latin school, and afterward entered

Harvard college, where he ran errands for the president, waited on table at commons, and received aid from scholarship funds. He was poor in mathematics,

**Emerson's  
Education**

satisfactory but not brilliant in other studies. Rhetoric and elocution interested him, and he is said always to have retained a fancy that he would like to be professor of these branches. His reading was extensive, but desultory. It seems to have been understood that he should enter the ministry, and there is no record of the usual agonies over the choice of a profession. After his graduation in 1821 he taught school for four years to save money. Then he entered Harvard Divinity School, but was soon forced to leave on account of poor health. The next year he was licensed to preach, without examination. His health continued precarious, and for some time prevented him from becoming a candidate for a regular pulpit. At last, in 1829, he became pastor of the Old North Church, Boston—formerly the church of the Mathers. The same year he was married to Miss Ellen Tucker, of Concord, New Hampshire.

Emerson was now approaching the age of thirty and gave no indication of any unusual or peculiar ability. As a pulpit orator he had the fascination of a fine

**Emerson as  
Pastor**

personality, and his younger hearers said that he "made religion real;" but his biographer finds nothing remarkable in his sermons. He continued in his pastorate until 1832, when he resigned on account of a disinclination to administer the Lord's Supper. He was no violent iconoclast or anti-ritualist, but he found that the sacrament did not mean to him what it was supposed to mean, and rather than go through the form without the spirit he proposed either that he should be excused from administering it, or that he should resign. The church was unwilling to adopt the former alternative, and a separation followed, evidently without ill feeling on either side. The church con-



tinued his salary for a time and he frequently occupied his old pulpit.

Mrs. Emerson had died earlier in the same year, and in December he sailed for Malta, hoping to find better health.

**Emerson's  
Visit to Europe** He travelled through much of Italy, visited Paris, and returned by way of England. He was not a sight-seer; he has little to say of scenery, or customs, or works of art. He found, as he said, always "the same faces under new caps and jackets." His chief interest was in men, and he took pleasure in meeting Landor in Italy, and Coleridge, Carlyle, and Wordsworth in Great Britain. His visit to Carlyle at Craigenputtock was the beginning of a friendship that lasted till death.

**Emerson as  
Lecturer** After his return to America in 1833 Emerson preached nearly every Sunday in Unitarian pulpits, and delivered many lectures. The "lyceums" which about this time were organized in every city and village and in most country districts gave the profession of lecturer an unusual importance, and most men who were prominently before the public appeared more or less frequently upon the platform. With Emerson lecturing was an important avocation for forty years. He began with subjects from natural history and his travels, but his teaching was always ethical, and he soon gave his lectures such titles as his essays now bear. The extent of his tours gradually widened until it included Illinois and Wisconsin, and the border states of the South. In 1834 he settled at Concord, which was henceforth to be his home; and the next year he married Miss Lydia Jackson. A small income came to him from the estate of his first wife, and in later years his books brought him something; but at first he found it hard to live within his income. As the works of Carlyle appeared, he attended to their republication in America, and often embarrassed himself by advancing considerable sums for this pur-



pose. He also found it necessary to keep open house for the many pilgrims who came to Concord to ask advice, or more frequently to enlist him in some wild reform. But though he found it necessary to practice strict economy and to lecture each year to make up a deficit, he never really suffered from poverty. With the exception of a lecturing trip to England

in 1847-8 his life passed uneventfully until the burning of his house in 1872. Even before this his friends had noticed the beginnings of mental weakness, the tendency to which was probably in the blood. The shock and exposure at the time of the fire hastened the process of decay, and for the remaining ten years of his life he was never quite himself. His memory was precarious, and his mind lacked its old incisiveness except at moments. Immediately after the fire friends provided for a trip to the Nile, which he had always wished to see, and on his return he found his house rebuilt and his library in its old place. He occasionally repeated some of his lectures, and nominally superintended the publication of some new works, made up from old manuscripts.

Emerson's distinctive genius developed late. His first publication was a thin volume entitled *Nature*, issued in 1836. The next year he attracted attention by his Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard on "The American Scholar;" and in 1838 his famous address to the graduating class at Harvard Divinity School antagonized the conservative Unitarians, and gave him the reputation in some circles of being a dangerous man. The first series of *Essays*, 1841, and the second series, 1844, were adaptations of his lectures; indeed the same may be said of most of his later prose volumes—*Miscellanies*, 1849, *Representative Men*, 1850, *The Conduct of Life*, 1860, *Society and Solitude*, 1870. *English Traits*, published in 1856, was the result of his second trip abroad. The volume entitled

**Emerson's  
Later Years**

**Emerson's  
Prose Writings**

*Letters and Social Aims* was compiled from his manuscripts under his partial direction in 1875. Another collection, *Natural History of the Intellect*, was issued after his death. His correspondence with Carlyle and with other friends has since been published, and his *Journals* are now being given to the public.

While in college Emerson had written verse, and there is evidence that he always cared much for the power of poetic expression. He frequently refers to his poetic temperament, and even speaks of himself as by nature a poet. Some of his poems were published in the "Dial," but he issued no collection until 1847. Another volume appeared in 1865, *May-Day* in 1867, and a revised collection in 1878. In 1874 he published *Parnassus*, an anthology made up of the English poems that he especially enjoyed. Most of the selections were made long before; but the fact that some were admitted after his powers began to decline makes the book of little value, even as an indication of the editor's taste.

Emerson's mind was so individual that it is hard to characterize it in ordinary terms. His great intellectuality is conceded by everyone; yet he was not a great scholar or a systematic thinker. He read much at some periods of his life, but he cared for a striking sentence rather than for the organized thought of a book, and he always held that reading was only the recreation of a scholar. He was not deeply versed in any language, or science, or philosophy. His free handling of the names of German philosophers and of Oriental poets might seem to imply familiarity, but, as was usual in his time, his references were often based on slight and second-hand information. As an observer, both of men and of nature, he was usually quick and accurate, though he sometimes seems shrewd rather than deep. His lack of system

#### Emerson's Verse

#### Emerson's Intellectual Characteristics

is seen in the disorganized structure of his lectures and essays, and in his failure to formulate any system, or even to classify materials. His justification he found in his philosophy, which taught him to look within himself at each moment, without reference to the past, and to avoid forms and systems as repressing. But his beliefs and his habits of thought coincided. He proceeded by insight, by inspiration, in the cant phrase of his admirers, by "possession," rather than by ratiocinative processes.

With this idealism were combined intensely practical qualities. In this respect he resembled the older Puritans, who with all their religious intensity built up fortunes and managed shrewdly the affairs of state. Emerson was not an especially good financier, but he had fair business instincts

**Emerson's  
Practical  
Qualities**

and a practical common-sense way of looking at everyday affairs. He made a good neighbor, who "always kept his fences up." He attended town-meetings and mingled in a perfectly natural way with the farmers and villagers about him. He foretold, as clearly as any banker or merchant could have done, the causes that would interfere with the success of the Brook Farm community. Surrounded as he was by cranks and enthusiasts, he tried no wilder experiments than practicing vegetarianism for a few weeks, and inviting the house-maids to sit at the family table. It was this happy balance between the transcendental and the practical that gave him his leadership. His words inspired the most idealistic of his followers. His actions gave no offense and little chance for ridicule to the most hard-headed critic. Moreover he had the judgment to see what he could and could not do, and where his own work lay, and he refused to be closely allied with extreme reforms of any kind. Even where he sympathized with a crusade like that against slavery, he felt that the active work could best be done by others. He never

temporized, or concealed his thoughts. His speech on John Brown and other anti-slavery utterances are strong; but he did not give himself entirely to the movement, and to reformers with one idea seemed lukewarm.

Personally Emerson seems to have exercised a fascination on all who knew him. People went to his lectures because of the man, if not for his ideas. Even the wild reformers who failed to win him to their own notions usually left him with no less of love and admiration because of their disappointment. The few glimpses that we have of his home life show almost ideal relations with his children; and the "curious, sociable, cheerful public funeral," as Henry James calls it, was only one indication of the way he was regarded by his Concord neighbors. Still, there was an aloofness about him that kept all men at a little distance. He had no intimates outside of his own family. While in college he sometimes joined convivial circles, and later he was a welcome member of the famous Saturday Club, which included all the prominent literary men of Boston. But though always gracious and winning, he never allowed his reserve to be broken down.

Emerson's literary tastes are not easily learned or understood. His biographer says that he saw nothing in Shelley,

**Emerson's** Aristophanes, *Don Quixote*, Miss Austen,  
**Literary Tastes** Dickens—a list as heterogeneous as those which he loved to put together for himself.

There is hardly more similarity between the authors that he admired—Byron, Moore, George Herbert, Beaumont and Fletcher. One is led to suppose that his enthusiasm for Goethe was caught mostly from Carlyle; and that his interest in Hafiz and other Orientals was, unconsciously of course, a little faddish. His writings show quotations from a great range of authors, but they are mostly striking phrases, chosen for themselves and not for their connection with a sys-

tem of ideas. It was probably the authors who could furnish such phrases that he enjoyed most. He set great store by form of expression, and was forever striving for it. Not even personal friendship could reconcile him to Carlyle's prose style. He had, as Lowell points out, an acute sense for the inevitable word. He composed by sentences, and when a sentence shaped itself for him he put it in his notebook for use as occasion arose. His lectures and essays were made up of these prearranged sentences with more or less of connective material supplied. He never spoke impromptu, and he was not great as a letter writer. On the whole, he seems to have had no philosophy of literature, but to have liked the work which had form, and which appealed to him in his mood. It seems hopeless to attempt to trace a connection between his reading and his prose style.

The first published work, *Nature*, differs but little in style from those that follow. It has slightly more of plan, though logical sequence is not always found where it

#### **Nature**

is promised. It contains illustrations of the author's favorite habit of enumerating a list of heterogeneous persons, or things, as "language, sleep, madness, dreams, beasts, sex." And it abounds in the short, quotable sentences which are so forceful in the essays: "Nature never wears a mean appearance;" "Give me health and a day, and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous;" "Man is the dwarf of himself;" "All that Adam had, all that Cæsar could, you have and do." The leading idea of *Nature* is that which has already been given as the central thought of transcendentalism. Every soul is of the divine essence, and may have communication with all that is divine in the universe; and

#### **Emerson's Message**

since all things and all actions are manifestations of the divine, it may read a spiritual lesson in every work of nature or of art. This thought, with its resulting lesson of individual dignity and its



innumerable corollaries and applications, is the author's one message to the world, and is found on almost every page that he wrote. Thus, the essay on "History" begins:

There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind, is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent.

Passages were frequently transferred from one lecture to another, and new lectures were made up by piecing together passages from old ones. It is often impossible on reading a paragraph to guess in what particular essay or lecture it may be found.

It is not true, however, that the author mainly repeats himself. His lesson is one which has so many applications, and on which so much depends, that each statement under new conditions seems a new thought. It is probably impossible now for anyone to receive from the *Essays* the same tonic effect that they gave to the author's contemporaries. For two generations they have been common property, and not only their ideas but their imagery are everywhere echoed in the pulpit, the lecture room, and the review article. Every young man and woman is familiar through indirect sources with much of the best that Emerson has to offer. Yet it is probable that to-day few readers, certainly few young readers of idealistic tendencies, make their first acquaintance with the *Essays* without receiving a distinct stimulus. There is little that seems really new. Indeed, some of the most effective ideas are those that the reader at once recognizes as his own; but there is a suggestiveness which starts train after train of thought.

It is sometimes charged that Emerson is too hopeful, that he disregards the evil and the disappointment in the world,



and leads his readers to expect too much of life. This is undoubtedly true, and each reader must decide for himself whether it is a defect. In Emerson's own

**Emerson's  
Optimism**

eyes it was not. A man with the acuteness of observation shown in his countless descriptions of nature and in his homely illustrations from life could hardly fail to see the evil as well as the good. That he preferred to ignore it rather than to make it conspicuous by waging open fight only shows his faith in his ideals. A more serious charge against the essays is the inconsistency of occasional passages, and the use of phrases which taken by themselves seem over-audacious. This arises from

**Over-Audacious  
Phrases**

the habit of looking at a truth from different angles in order to gain a complete view, and caused the author no concern whatever. Yet the reader who, ignorant of Emerson, meets for the first time the phrase "I am part or parcel of God," or a passage like the following from the essay on "Self-Reliance," is likely to be shocked or bewildered:

Do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison, if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots; and the thousand-fold Relief Societies;—though I confess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar which by-and-by I shall have the manhood to withhold.

To the habitual reader of Emerson, however, statements like these appear in their true relation, and seem both plain and natural.

The peculiar structure of the prose is such that what is true of one volume is true of all. Probably the two series

of *Essays* are now the most widely read, though at first they attracted little attention. *Representative Men* was in plan suggested by *Heroes and Hero-Worship*.

**Characteristics of Emerson's Prose** Some of the early addresses collected in the volume of *Miscellanies* are more coherent and more logical in structure than most of the other works. *English Traits* is not an ordinary traveller's book, but as the title implies is a discussion of the characteristics of a people, with such chapter headings as "Race," "Ability," "Manners," "Truth," and "Character." Emerson liked the English, though he saw their weaknesses, and the book shows shrewd and kindly insight. The posthumous volume *Natural History of the Intellect* bears a title which Emerson had long had in mind as that of a work on philosophy, and which he gave to a series of lectures delivered at Harvard college; but most of the material of these lectures appears in his other writings, and but two or three of them are given in this final volume.

The poems show as much individuality as the prose, and have probably been the cause of more discussion. The ideas that they present are the same as those of the essays, though with more stress on the beauty of nature. In form they tend to the irregular and occasionally to the eccentric. The usual verdict of the author's early contemporaries was that of the "Fable for Critics:"

Whose prose is grand verse, while his verse, the Lord knows,  
Is some of it pr—No, 'tis not even prose!

and they were accused of utter lack of rhythm, melody, and metre. It is an interesting illustration of the growing accommodation of the ear to flexibility in verse that these criticisms seem absurd now. Still there are occasional harsh lines, and false rhymes, many of which are not, however, displeasing to those who enjoy a subtle assonance. Metrical students also

say with truth that he commanded few measures, and had a fondness for the somewhat jiggling octosyllabics. Another peculiarity which offends some readers is the use in imaginative passages of words with unpoetic associations. Emerson went as far as any of the poets who believed in the democracy of words. His usage has sometimes an effectiveness of its own, as in the quatrain:

He planted where the deluge ploughed,  
His hired hands were wind and cloud;  
His eyes detect the Gods concealed  
In the hummock of the field.

More questionable are the lines on the pine-tree in "Wood-notes:"

My garden is the cloven rock,  
And my manure the snow.

And to the unsympathetic reader the poetic approaches the ridiculous in the passage from "The Sphinx:"

Erect as a sunbeam  
Upspringeth the palm;  
The elephant browses,  
Undaunted and calm.

Despite all this technical criticism the poems have a wonderful charm for many readers. Among the rough verses are passages of haunting cadence and melody, and often whole poems where an admirer, at least, would want no line changed. True, the longer poems are formless, and "May-Day" when republished was changed as "if half its paragraphs were to be taken and shuffled like a pack of cards." The "Threnody," written on the death of the author's son, shows too intense personal sorrow to compete with smoother and more academic elegies. The long poems must be read, like the essays, in bits. A few of the shorter poems, like "The Sphinx" and "The Problem," were long held up to ridicule as unintelligible, though it does not seem that they should offer much difficulty

to one who knew Emerson's philosophy. It is in some of the briefer poems, like the "Concord Hymn," "Rhodora," and "Days," and even more epigrammatic passages and fragments, that his power is seen. The bulk of these is very small, but their value lies in the concentration of thought and perfection of form.

It is the usual fate of a prose essayist whose ideas are more valuable than his form to be neglected after his message is understood and diffused; and it seems probable that this fate will slowly overtake Emerson. So far as the sentence and the apt word are concerned his manner is worthy of his thought; and many of his phrases are now embedded in our speech. The lack of unity and logical sequence, however, is so serious a blemish on the prose writings as a whole that it would be rash to predict their permanency. As yet, however, the *Essays*, judged by the test of cheap reprints and large sales, are almost undiminished in popularity.

It seems possible, though it is too soon to make the prediction, that the writings of Emerson that stand best chance of permanency are the better poems. These won their first appreciation from persons who knew the essays, while other readers maintained that they were obscure. With the wider dissemination of idealistic views, most persons have the clew to their interpretation, and few of the verses trouble any careful reader to-day. The essays, built as they were from lyceum lectures, have something of the provincial about them. They seem calculated for the meridian of Boston and the year 184—. The poems have, as all true poetry has, more of a universal quality. British readers, for whom the essays were not especially designed, have always ranked the poems relatively high. It is noticeable, too, that much of the late verse of minor American poets shows a legitimate but unmistakable influence of Emerson.

**Fate of  
Emerson's  
Prose**

**Permanency of  
the Poems**

Whatever the ultimate fate of Emerson's writings, he will always occupy a prominent place in the history of American thought. At the most critical time in the intellectual development of the country his influence was greater than that of any other man. He suited his generation and his surroundings. Even to the present time he takes almost unquestioned rank as the most powerful and stimulating ethical teacher that the nation has produced.

**Emerson's  
Final Rank**

The second of the transcendentalists in literary importance was Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). He was born at Concord, Massachusetts, where his father had failed in trade and become a maker of lead pencils. Though his family was not well-to-do, he managed, partly through the aid of scholarships and his own labors, to complete a course at Harvard. He seems to have been a fair student, though he was not always tractable, and made a not wholly favorable impression on the faculty. After his graduation he supported himself by surveying and such odd jobs as whitewashing, and by the slight returns from lecturing and writing. His failure to adopt a profession came not from laziness, but from the fact that he had no dependents and few physical wants, and that he wished to be independent. His acquaintance with Emerson began about the time of his graduation from Harvard in 1837, and from 1841 to 1843 he was a member of Emerson's household. In 1845 he built a hut on the shore of Walden Pond, near Concord, and lived there alone for two or three years. At various times he took trips through New England by boat and on foot, and these furnished material for much of his writing. During his lifetime he published two volumes, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*, and *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. He delivered occasional lectures, and contributed a number of short essays to the "Dial" and other magazines. Since his death

**Henry David  
Thoreau**

these essays, and other writings left unpublished, have been issued in several volumes.

None of the biographies of Thoreau is satisfactory, and it is hard to arrive at a sure estimate of his personality. He

**Thoreau's  
Personality**

had a strain of eccentricity, probably derived from his mother's family, but his peculiarities seem to have been misunderstood and their importance overrated. His experiment in the simple life at Walden has caused him to be styled a hermit and a recluse, though he went to the village daily, and always welcomed intercourse with friends. One-sided and paradoxical statements which he loved to make for their startling effect earned for him the reputation of being stoical and misanthropic, and of "not believing in civilization." His refusal to pay taxes to a government that he thought unjust was a procedure advocated by many other abolitionists. Though he had many peculiarities, he was a man of strong human emotions, which at times he liked to conceal. He had a great fondness for nature, of which he was an almost abnormally keen observer. He took especial delight in seeing what others left unnoticed in things about him. He says, "I omit the unusual . . . and describe the common. This has the greatest charm, and is the true theme of poetry." It was with the eye of a poet that he usually looked at nature, though he turned his powers to account in making some natural history collections for Agassiz. His love of nature did not, however, interfere with his interest in books. He was a wide reader, of catholic taste, and an indefatigable student when he once began a subject. He knew the Greek poets thoroughly and made careful translations from some of them. Like many other transcendentalists he dabbled in the Oriental writers. He was widely read in English literature, not only in the classics, but in out-of-the-way writers, like the minor Elizabethan dramatists and the lesser poets of the seventeenth century. His biographer



computes that there are quotations from a hundred authors in one of his books alone; and most of these fit the context naturally, not as if introduced to show recently acquired erudition. His criticisms, as of Chaucer in the *Week on the Concord and Merrimac Rivers*, show shrewd appreciation of literary merit. His reading extended even to town histories and similar sources of information, from which he gathered interesting bits of fact. He was strongly influenced by the transcendental ideas, and as he lacked Emerson's sanity and balance he sometimes went astray. He was, however, probably aware of the full absurdity of his most startling expressions.

The character of Thoreau's writings is indicated by the titles of the two books published during his lifetime, and by

**Thoreau's  
Prose**

those given to some of the posthumous collections—*Excursions*, *The Maine Woods*, *Cape Cod*, *A Yankee in Canada*, etc. These are

mostly descriptions of nature, combined with discussions of the author's philosophy of life. The nature descriptions are characterized by clearness, picturesqueness, quiet humor, and a rare individual quality. At times, however, they are marred by a forced pun or other consciously startling expression. This tendency to be startling is still more prominent in the frequent bits of moralizing. It is the quotation of isolated sayings from these passages that has given Thoreau the reputation of being more erratic than he is. In *Walden*, the best of his works, the reader is likely to be struck first by the oddity of a passage like the following:

None is so poor that he need sit on a pumpkin. That is shiftlessness. There is plenty of such chairs as I like best in the village garrets to be had for taking them away. Furniture! Thank God, I can sit and I can stand without the aid of a furniture warehouse. What man but a philosopher would not be ashamed to see his furniture packed in a cart and going up country exposed to the light of heaven and the eyes of men, a beggarly account of empty boxes. That

is Spaulding's furniture. I could never tell from inspecting such a load whether it belonged to a so-called rich man or a poor one. Indeed, the more you have of such things the poorer you are.

It is only after a re-reading, perhaps after reading aloud, that one feels the full charm of a chapter like that on "Sounds:"

Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells, the Lincoln, Acton, Bedford, or Concord bell, when the wind was favorable, a faint, sweet, and as it were, natural melody, worth importing into the wilderness. At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept. All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre, just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes by the azure tint it imparts to it. There came to me in this case a melody which the air had strained, and which had conversed with every leaf and needle of the wood, that portion of the sound which the elements had taken up and modulated and echoed from vale to vale.

Thoreau's verse was mostly written while he was young, though a few bits are scattered through his later prose. It has been enthusiastically praised by admirers of the author's philosophy, and contains some fine couplets and quatrains; but it is rarely well sustained, and the writer's taste is not sure. Sometimes he strikes out a stanza like the following, in which he antedates a well-known poem of Matthew Arnold:

**Thoreau's  
Verse**

The smothered streams of love, which flow  
More bright than Phlegethon, more low,  
Island us ever, like the sea,  
In an Atlantic mystery.

But in close juxtaposition to this are lines like those on the boatbuilders heard across the river:

The waves slowly beat  
Just to keep the noon sweet,  
And no sound is floated o'er,  
Save the mallet on shore,  
Which echoing on high,  
Seems a-calking the sky.

In his lifetime Thoreau was looked upon as an imitator of Emerson; of late years he has seemed remarkable for his individuality. His philosophy was no doubt greatly influenced by Emerson, but his literary style seems to have suffered more from occasional Carlylisms than from any unfortunate indebtedness to his friend and neighbor. He is one of the few American writers whose fame has steadily increased. His contemporaries refused to take him seriously, or to buy his books. Later generations have been glad to collect and publish all his available writings, and have come to esteem him for his delicate and sympathetic portrayals of nature and for his pointed, if impractical, comments on life. Though his eccentricities prevent him from ranking with the greatest American essayists, he has a unique charm for many readers, and his place in American literature seems secure.

Amos Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), the best known of the more erratic idealists, was the son of a Connecticut farmer.

**Amos Bronson  
Alcott**

His family name was Alcox, and he made the change to Alcott on reaching manhood. He received a slight education in the country schools and from the parish minister, but by the time he was fifteen years of age he was working in a clock factory. After an unsuccessful experience as peddler in New York, Massachusetts, and the South he turned to school teaching. His first venture was at Cheshire, where he introduced so many innovations in methods of instruction and discipline that he was forced to leave. Afterward he taught in various schools, the most important of which was in Boston. Here a number of prominent families placed their children under his instruction, and his attempts at educational reform attracted considerable attention. He interpreted literally the ideas expressed in Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," and spent much time in discussing the eternal verities with the

infants committed to his charge. Some of these discussions were published as *Conversations with Children on the Gospels* in 1836. His patrons were startled to learn from this book that he had been conversing with his pupils on the physical phenomena of birth, and many of them withdrew their children. The end of the school came a little later when he alienated his remaining supporters by admitting a colored pupil.

By this time Alcott was a transcendentalist of the mystic sort, interested in temperance, women's rights, dress reform, dietetics, the water cure, and all the other fads over which New England was then agitated. He aided in founding the Symposium, which included most of the leading devotees of the new philosophy. He also began to hold "conversations" at which, for a substantial fee, he discussed the nature of things. In 1837 he had completed a rhapsodical work entitled *Psyche, or the Breath of Childhood*, but it was never published. A few years later he removed to Concord and endeavored to make a living by day labor among his neighbors. The demands made upon his time by reform conventions and the visits of other enthusiasts were, however, so great that his family had but precarious support. His theories had already gained some following among the more erratic liberals abroad, and in 1842 Emerson and other friends subscribed money to send him to England. Here he found some congenial spirits, but failed to make a favorable impression on Carlyle. When he returned he brought with him two Englishmen, Lane and Wright, who were looking for a spot "whereon the new Eden may be planted." They secured a farm which they rechristened "Fruitlands," and on which they endeavored to found a community which should be less sordid than that at Brook Farm. No animal products were to be eaten, and the soil was not to be insulted by the admixture of manures of animal

**Alcott's Transcendentalism**

origin. The rights of worms and insects were to be respected. No vegetables were to be eaten which, like the potato, grew downward instead of aspiring. After the failure of this experiment the Alcott family endured various vicissitudes until 1857, when they again settled at Concord. After the eldest daughter, Louisa, became able to support the family with her pen her father gave all his time to writing and philosophical speculation. In 1879 he was instrumental in founding the Concord School of Philosophy, of which he continued as dean until his death. In the winter of 1880-81 he made an extended trip in the West giving conversations. At this time he was returning to something approaching orthodoxy in religious belief. In 1882 he suffered a paralytic stroke, after which he wrote nothing.

Besides the writings already mentioned Alcott published in the "Dial" his "Orphic Sayings," a series of sententious observations which were often unintelligible, and which did as much as any one thing to expose transcendentalists to ridicule. Between 1868 and his death he issued several volumes—*Tablets*, *Concord Days*, and *Table Talk* in prose, and *Sonnets and Canzonets* and *New Connecticut* in verse. Some of his prose essays, like those on lighter topics in *Concord Days*, have a pleasant literary flavor. Wherever he deals with philosophical questions he shows an abnormal mysticism in thought, and a tendency to be "orphyic" in form. *New Connecticut* is autobiography in jingling quatrains. *Sonnets and Canzonets*, a series part of which tells the story of his love and marriage after the manner of an Elizabethan sonnet cycle, is in smooth conventional form, but there is evidence that his lines were retouched by his friends. In all his writings he shows the sense of his own importance which inspired his question to Emerson: "You write on the genius of Plato, of Pythagoras, of Jesus; why do you not write of me?"

#### Alcott's Writings

Alcott's friends, among whom were most of the greater transcendentalists, found something in the man which they liked, and much in his thought which they considered suggestive. Some of his pedagogical notions foreshadow theories since generally accepted. It is probable that he does not appear at his best in his writings, and that he does not now have full justice done him. But it seems to be his fate to be remembered as an awful example of the extremes to which transcendentalists could go.

**Alcott's Rank** Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), the most famous woman of the transcendental movement, was born in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts. Her father, a somewhat erratic lawyer and politician, took personal charge of her education, and put her through a process of intellectual forcing which she resented in later years. She began the study of Latin at six years of age, and by the time that she was a young woman was well versed in Latin, German, French, and Italian, and knew some Greek. After her father's death she voluntarily assumed much of the responsibility for the care, support, and education of her younger brothers and sisters. She taught in Alcott's famous school in Boston, and in Providence, Rhode Island, and she conducted with great success conversations for classes of women in Boston. From 1840 to 1842 she edited the "Dial." In 1844 she became a member of the editorial staff of the "New York Tribune," and lived for a time in the family of Horace Greeley. While in New York she visited many of the charitable and penal institutions, and was greatly interested in sociological questions, particularly those relating to women. Her contributions to the "Tribune" were artistic, dramatic, and literary criticisms, and miscellaneous articles. In 1846 she went abroad and visited England, France, and Italy. In England she met most of the leading men of letters, and in Paris formed the acquaintance of George Sand. She was in



Italy during the troubles of 1848-9, and was the friend and confidante of Mazzini, whom she had met in London. Late in 1847 she was secretly married to the Count Ossoli, a young Italian gentleman who had forsaken his family principles and become a liberal. The next summer she spent in the mountains of Abruzzi, where her son was born. As her marriage was still a secret, she left the child with a nurse and returned to Rome. During the siege of 1849 she attended the wounded in one of the hospitals. After the victory of the French she went with her husband and child to Florence, and in the spring of 1850 the family sailed from Leghorn for New York. The vessel was a small merchant brig, carrying but two other passengers. After an unfortunate voyage, during which the captain died and the child was ill with the small-pox, the vessel was wrecked off Fire Island, New York, and the entire family was drowned.

An attempt to understand Margaret Fuller's personality leads to great perplexity. To the unsympathetic world which saw her at a distance she was a type of the mystical transcendentalist, and a woman in whom intellectual ambition and an extraordinary egotism had crowded out all other qualities. This estimate might be supported by many citations from her journals, letters, and writings intended for publication. On the other hand, her friends saw in her many admirable womanly qualities. A series of love-letters written in 1845-6 to James Nathan, a Jewish commission merchant of New York, while they tempt severe comment on the recipient who made them public, tell the story of an intense romance, hardly to be expected of an abnormally intellectual blue-stocking of thirty-five. In the end, however, she says in her journal: "I shall write a sketch of it and turn the whole to account in a literary way, since the affections and ideal hopes are so unproductive." Her secret marriage on short acquaint-

**Margaret  
Fuller's  
Personality**

ance to a man who was much her junior, and who according to her own frank statement was not her intellectual equal, was surprising, though it proved to be ideally happy. Her refusal in the final crisis of her life to be saved by the only available means because it involved separation of the family during the process of rescue is interpreted by some as an illustration of self-will, and by others as an instance of wifely and maternal devotion. While no theory of her personality will explain all the facts that are recorded of her, the most plausible seems to be that she was a woman of great mental alertness and strongly passionate nature, influenced by all the forces of transcendental New England. An unattractive personal appearance, a lack of tact, and a blunt and irritating manner inherited from her father repelled most persons at first sight, while she fascinated those who came within the range of her attraction. Her long friendship with Emerson is the most important of her intimacies. The world failed to satisfy either her intellectual or her emotional longings. From one disappointment came her mysticism, her occasional indulgence in the satiric mood, and her expressions of ridiculous or repelling egotism; from the other came the abandon shown in her letters to James Nathan, and perhaps in her marriage. Ill health and constant introspection led to many of her inconsistencies and sudden changes of mood.

It is as an illustration of the effect of transcendentalism on such a woman that the career of Margaret Fuller is chiefly important. Both she and her friends agreed that she talked much better than she wrote. Her first volume, *Summer on the Lakes*, published in 1843, was based on a Western excursion, supplemented by much hard labor in the library of Harvard college. Even since the editor of her collected works has omitted some of the longer digressions it is a disjointed and ill-proportioned work. Indeed, she seems always to have

**Margaret  
Fuller's  
Writings**

lacked a sense of literary form. Her pamphlet, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, expanded from an article in the "Dial," was published in 1844. It was long regarded as one of the ablest presentations of the claims of woman, but is now interesting chiefly as an indication of the way in which the important questions regarding woman's place in society have changed. Just before she went abroad in 1846 she gathered together two volumes of her fugitive writings under the title of *Papers on Literature and Art*. The manuscript of a work on the Italian Republic, the fruit of her best labors abroad, was lost at the time of her death. In 1855-6 her brother edited four volumes of her collected works, which include, besides the writings already mentioned, other papers from periodicals, and from manuscripts, a few original poems, and an early metrical translation of Goethe's "Tasso." Her verse is unsuccessful. Her prose is on a variety of subjects. She enjoyed nature, and wrote of it, though Emerson is right in saying that her "raptures" are somewhat "sickly and superficial." She had much to say of art, to which she was perhaps drawn by her study of Goethe, but her judgments are erratic. The same is true in a lesser degree of her literary criticism. Many of her writings are significant as indications of the transcendental view of things, but few of them deserve preservation for either content or manner. Much more interesting is the memoir in which Emerson, Channing, and James Freeman Clarke join their reminiscences and interpretations of her life and work.

Theodore Parker (1810-1860) was the most active practical reformer among the transcendentalists. His father was  
**Theodore Parker** unable to send him to college, but he took the entrance examinations at Harvard and studied by himself for four years, coming up from his home in Lexington, Massachusetts, to pass the examinations with each class. As he had not been in residence and had

paid no tuition, he did not receive his bachelor's degree. After completing a course at the Harvard Divinity school he became minister of the Unitarian church at West Roxbury, Massachusetts. His radicalism was soon apparent and older ministers of his denomination shunned him. In 1845 he began to preach in Boston, where he continued until just before his death. Though denied fellowship by other Unitarian churches he attracted a large congregation, and became known as a great pulpit orator and lyceum lecturer. He was active in all reforms, but especially in the anti-slavery movement. He aided fugitive slaves, incited mobs to rescue negroes from the hands of the authorities, secured arms to send to Kansas, and was privy to part, at least, of John Brown's plans for his Virginia campaign. His writings were numerous. He contributed several papers to the "Dial," and, beginning in 1849, conducted for three years the "Massachusetts Quarterly Review." His complete works, published in Boston and London after his death, include sermons, lectures, and suggestive articles on many themes.

Parker was a persistent and energetic student, and he had remarkable powers of acquisition. He knew something of twenty different languages, and he had made some investigations in most departments of knowledge, particularly those relating to philosophy. He had the power which belongs to a self-educated man with a vast store of facts which he can command and use at will. The calm patience of the scholar or the higher tastes of the man of culture he did not have. He wrote that he would rather have been a Franklin than a Michael Angelo. His sense of literature as well as of other arts was uncertain. His own works, though they are always forcible and show the rare power of introducing numerous facts and allusions without the appearance of pedantry, are often slightly bombastic, and lack reserve and sustained dignity of tone.

**Parker's  
Attainments**

Unitarianism changed rapidly in Parker's lifetime, and when he died those who had earlier denied him fellowship were

**Parker's Rank** ready to build his tomb as that of a prophet. His biography has several times been written, his works are still published, and the centenary of his birth was widely observed. He was an attractive and forceful man, able and sincere, and he contributed something to the development of religious thought. In American letters he was a striking and picturesque rather than an important figure.

**George Ripley** (1802-1880) was born in Greenfield, Massachusetts, was graduated at Harvard in 1823, and after completing his divinity course became pastor of a newly organized Unitarian church in Boston. He was a thorough student, and soon came to be regarded as one of the scholars of the transcendental movement. His devotion to the new ideas was not wholly approved by his church, and he resigned his pastorate to become the leader in the Brook Farm Association. In all his work he was greatly assisted by his wife, who was a woman of remarkable personality. Both Mr. and Mrs. Ripley devoted themselves with equal earnestness to the speculative and the practical questions involved in the new scheme. Both did their share of manual labor and taught in the school. Ripley's devotion to the community continued to the last, and when failure came he assumed the debts that remained, and sold his extensive private library to meet them. For a time he conducted at New York the "Harbinger," which had been founded by the Brook Farm community as an organ of Fourierism. When this failed Horace Greeley, who had been interested in Brook Farm, made him literary editor of the "New York Tribune," a position that he held to his death. He also did much miscellaneous writing and with C. A. Dana edited the *New American Cyclopædia*.

Ripley is important for his connection with Brook Farm



and kindred movements, and for his later work as literary critic on the "New York Tribune." When he accepted his position on the "Tribune" no daily newspaper in the country gave a scholarly and dignified discussion of literary matters. Though he was not a great critic, his taste was sound, his reading wide, and his scholarship thorough, and he made his department a model for other journals. He is, however, to be remembered for his influence, not for his achievements. A projected collection of his essays and reviews was never published and only the curious student is likely to read his writings to-day.

Among the minor poets of transcendentalism were Christopher P. Cranch, Jones Very, and William Ellery Channing.

**Minor Poets—  
Cranch, Very,  
Channing**

Cranch (1813-1892) was born in Virginia, was graduated from Harvard, and during the early years of the transcendental movement was a clergyman. Later he withdrew from the ministry, studied art in Italy and France, lived for a time in New York, and returned to Cambridge, where he died in 1892. His poems of the transcendental period were mostly short lyrics, of which the best is the "Stanzas" published in the "Dial," beginning:

Thought is deeper than all speech,  
Feeling deeper than all thought.

Later he published a translation of Virgil, some tales for children, and other writings. Jones Very (1813-1880) was born in Salem and after graduation from Harvard was tutor in that institution. He became afflicted, however, with a religious monomania that interfered with his career. Though licensed to preach he never had a congregation, and after the transcendental excitement was over lived quietly until his death in 1880. The seven hundred poems in his collected works are all short, many of them being sonnets, and the ma-



jority of them express his idealistic beliefs. They are smooth, and delicate in manner, and some of them still hold their places in the anthologies; but the author is more likely to be remembered as another erratic member of Emerson's circle than as a poet. William Ellery Channing (1818-1901), frequently known as Ellery Channing to distinguish him from his more eminent uncle of the same name, was a native of Boston. He attended Harvard college for a time, went west for two or three years, and engaged in editorial work in New York and elsewhere. His wife was a sister of Margaret Fuller, and he was intimate with Thoreau, whose biography he wrote. His friends felt that he had the temperament and the insight of a true poet; and some of his verses strike a purer note than those of Cranch or Very, though they are usually not well sustained.

Among the early transcendentalists who afterward became practical men of affairs were George William Curtis (1824-1892) and Charles A. Dana (1819-1897).

**Charles A. Dana** Both were contributors to the "Dial" and residents at Brook Farm, and after the failure of that experiment both removed to New York and engaged in editorial work. The former will be considered among the New York writers. Dana's later work, which included many years of editorial writing for the New York "Tribune" and the "Sun," and the editing with Ripley of the *New American Cyclopædia*, is less important. His early verses and some prose work in the "Dial" and the "Harbinger" show an idealism and aspiration not to be suspected from his later career.

Orestes A. Brownson (1803-1876), who during his lifetime dallied with most of the faiths, religious and political, known in America, was a transcendentalist during the central years of the movement. When a young man he joined the Presbyterian church, but a few years later he was a Universalist minister and editor of a Universalist journal. He

next transferred his allegiance to the Unitarians. After serving some time in the ministry of that denomination he became a transcendentalist, and from 1836 to 1843 was pastor of the Society for Christian Union and Progress in Boston. From 1844 until his death he was a communicant of the Roman Catholic Church, though his orthodoxy was often questioned by the American Catholic clergy. He was active in politics, much of the time as a member of the Democratic party, but often independent. In 1838 he founded the "Boston Quarterly Review;" and after he became a Catholic he edited "Brownson's Quarterly Review." Besides his magazine and review articles he published *Charles Elwood, or The Infidel Converted*, a novel, in 1840, *The Spirit-Rapper, an Autobiography*, in 1854, and several other works on religion, philosophy, and questions of the day. Of these *Charles Elwood* is the only one of importance in which he takes the transcendental point of view. He was an occasional attendant at the meetings of the Symposium, and the contributors to the "Boston Quarterly Review" were in some cases the same as those of the "Dial." Brownson was a born controversialist, and no matter what his position might be at the time, he supported it with cleverness and some ability. His frequent changes of party and church did much to discredit him, and his ideas were often not taken seriously. His style was well adapted to temporary controversy, but it was too flippant and uncertain in manner to ensure a lasting reputation for the author. James Freeman Clarke (1810-1888) was another transcendentalist, Unitarian clergyman, and versatile author whose fame as a man of letters is by no means commensurate with his influence while living. He founded the Church of the Disciples in Boston, and became known as a transcendentalist, an abolitionist, and an advocate of woman's suffrage and other reforms. In later years he was often spoken of as

**Minor  
Transcendental  
Writers**

the leader of the Unitarian church in America. His numerous published works include many sermons, popular essays on theological subjects, some translations, and several historical and biographical works. His book on *Ten Great Religions* attracted considerable attention. A later work, *The Legend of Thomas Didymus, the Jewish Sceptic*, was an attempt to vivify and reconcile the gospel stories by means of an imaginary narrative credited to Thomas. The book is unsatisfactory; and indeed the author is rarely successful in anything but sermons and popular religious tracts.

### III. THE NEW ENGLAND ABOLITIONISTS

The belief in the unrighteousness of human slavery, which finally resulted in the Emancipation Proclamation, did not originate in New England. It had been developing for generations throughout the civilized world, and in the early part of the nineteenth century was generally diffused. More enlightened thinkers in the South, as well as those in the North, condemned the institution until changing economic conditions and resentment at what they considered unwarranted interference with local affairs forced them to support theories which at bottom they did not really believe. Both circumstances and temperament united, however, to make the descendants of the New England Puritans the leaders in the movement for wider human freedom. At first the North realized the practical difficulties of emancipation, as the South realized its theoretical desirability. But about the beginning of the period now under consideration a few persons began to emphasize the moral at the expense of the practical aspects of the question, and to call for immediate abolition. At first these radicals were condemned in the North as bitterly as in the South. Business advantage and a more laudable hesitancy to interfere in the affairs of other states led most citi-

#### **The Abolition Movement**

zens to resent any inflammatory utterances against slavery; and the lower and more selfish classes of the community carried their resentment against the reformers to the point of persecution. The early transcendentalists had to withstand ridicule and supercilious unbelief; the early abolitionists were forced to endure social ostracism, and even physical violence. The revolution which changed the feeling toward the abolitionists from abhorrence to honor came partly from an awakening of the public conscience, and partly from the political and economic developments that drove North and South into extreme opposing positions. This change was accomplished first in New England and was hastened by a great number and variety of writings by New England men.

All the transcendentalists who have been mentioned, with the partial exception of Brownson, were in sympathy with the anti-slavery agitation. Some of them, notably

**The Abolitionists** Emerson, felt that they had other messages to bear, and declined to take a very active part in abolition meetings and organizations; others were equally notable as anti-slavery workers and as transcendentalists. Parker and Clarke not only preached abolitionism, but personally aided in the rescue and secretion of runaway slaves. Dana, especially after he took up newspaper work in New York, was a strong supporter of the anti-slavery crusade. There was also a number of men, less speculative and mystical than the transcendentalists, whose chief energies were devoted to the abolition movement, and who fairly constitute a group of anti-slavery writers.

One of the earliest and most influential of these writers, though by no means the most meritorious, was William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879). He was a native of

**William Lloyd Garrison** Massachusetts, and after he had served an apprenticeship on a local paper edited several minor journals, among them the "Genius of Universal Eman-

cipation" at Baltimore. In 1831 he founded the "Liberator" at Boston, and he continued to edit it and to speak and write for abolition until his end was accomplished.

Garrison conducted his campaign, not by means of elaborate argument, but by the blunt and continued iteration of a few statements that he believed self-evident. His reasoning was simple. Starting with the postulate that all men are created free and equal, he argued that no man has a right to enslave another. Therefore, every slave is entitled to immediate emancipation regardless of consequences; the man who withholds due hire from the slave is a thief; and a Union based on a Constitution that recognizes an iniquity like slavery is accursed. The repetition of these ideas, expressed in the plainest language, on almost every page of Garrison's writings is inartistic, and to the man who thinks of expediency seems fanatical; but the very fact that it irritates makes it forcible. This force is increased by a certain earnestness and dignity that pervades even the most bitter passages. There is harsh language in abundance, but it is never blackguardism, and rarely personal vituperation. It is because his utterances, extreme and impractical as they were, contained a grain of uncomfortable truth, that Garrison was hated, reviled, and mobbed, and in the end brought men to his side. His personal courage, his unceasing application, and his power of striking expression made him one of the most important forces in bringing about emancipation. In the literary history of the country he holds only the minor place accorded to a forceful pamphleteer.

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892), the chief poet of the anti-slavery movement, was born in Haverhill, Massachusetts. Unlike the other more prominent literary men of New England he was a representative of the uncultured rural class. His ancestors

**The Appeal of  
Garrison's  
Writings**

**John Greenleaf  
Whittier**

were Quaker farmers who had quietly tilled the same homestead since 1647, and had occupied the house in which he was born since 1688. Whittier's own childhood was spent in the hard labor that devolved on a New England farmer's boy, varied by attendance at brief winter terms of country school. When about fourteen years of age he made the acquaintance of Burns's poems and was inspired to write verses of his own. A familiar story relates that one of these rhymed effusions was sent to a local paper, and that the editor, William Lloyd Garrison, rode to the Whittier home to see the young contributor, and to urge him to continue his education. The elder Whittier had a conservative Quaker farmer's distrust of superfluous learning, but his prejudices were so far overcome that the son spent two winters at Haverhill academy, earning his own expenses by shoe-making and teaching. Here he gained the rudiments of French and somewhat greater familiarity with English literature.

Through the influence of Garrison, Whittier secured in 1828 the editorship of the "American Manufacturer," published at Boston. Later he edited for brief periods of time weekly papers at Haverhill and at Hartford, Connecticut. Poor health, which throughout life interfered with his activities, and the circumstances of his family induced him to return to the farm in 1832. In 1836 the old homestead was sold, and he removed to the village of Amesbury, which was his permanent residence until his death. Meanwhile he had become, through Garrison's influence, an abolitionist, had published in 1833 a pamphlet on slavery entitled *Justice and Expediency*, and was taking an active part in the anti-slavery propaganda.

This devotion to an unpopular cause had a radical effect on both his worldly and his literary career. It blasted his political future, which is said to have been promising, and it changed the character of his writings. Before this he had

**Whittier an  
Abolitionist**



affected the manner of Byron and Scott, and had published many poems in newspapers and magazines. In 1831 he had collected a series of sketches first contributed to the "New England Magazine," and issued them as **Whittier's Early Writings** *Legends of New England*, and the next year he published a long narrative poem, "Moll Pitcher." These early writings, almost all of which were suppressed in later life, are intrinsically unimportant, but they indicate how different might have been his literary career if he had not deliberately given himself for thirty years to the anti-slavery cause.

Poor health and limited financial circumstances restricted Whittier's activities, but he gave to the abolition movement all the energy that he possessed. He conducted for a short time an abolitionist paper in **Whittier's Work Against Slavery** Philadelphia, where his office was destroyed by a mob, and he was threatened with personal violence; and from time to time he did editorial work on other papers. When new occasions arose he put in verse the feelings of his party. Nor was he useful merely as a writer. He believed in accomplishing results by any honorable means, and he became associated with the "New Movement," opposed in method to Garrison and others who refused to exercise political privileges under a government that tolerated slavery. The qualities which had made his own political prospects bright while he was a conservative still served him, and he took an active and often effective part in the work of conventions, committees, and other organizations. His Quaker faith prevented him from approving the war as such, but he seems to have felt that it was necessary, and he rejoiced in the result.

Whittier never married. Certain poems which he characterized as "subjective and reminiscent" imply that he had loved, but such was his reserve that his biographers have not succeeded in learning much regarding his affections, or even

in identifying their object or objects with certainty. One reason for his celibacy was probably his financial circumstances, and his feeling of obligation to his mother and sister.

**Whittier's  
Personal Life**

His health prevented him from engaging in regular remunerative work, and it was not until after the war that his copyrights yielded enough to relieve him from anxiety over business affairs. He was a man with few intimates, and these were mostly in the humbler walks of life. With the members of the Boston literary set he was on terms of pleasant acquaintanceship, but nothing more. His relations with James T. Fields and Bayard Taylor, whom he associates with himself in his poem, "The Tent on the Beach," were somewhat closer. Probably some of his neighbors in the little village of Amesbury knew him best. His closest friends outside his own social class were women.

The frequency of Whittier's publications suggests the rapidity and fluency with which he wrote. Besides the early

**Whittier a  
Prolific Writer**

works already mentioned he published "Mogg Megone," a long narrative poem, in 1836, and collections of poems in 1837, 1838, 1840, 1843, 1846, 1849, 1850, 1853, 1856, 1860, 1864, and 1865, besides several volumes of prose, and many articles in periodicals. When the "Atlantic Monthly" was founded he became one of the contributors. His volumes published before 1865 contain some of his best miscellaneous work, but throughout almost all of them the anti-slavery element is prominent, and in many it predominates.

Although he was interested in woman's suffrage and other reforms his heart was bound up only in the abolition movement, and when this was accomplished he became less of a propagandist and more of a man of letters. At the close of the war he was, however, nearly sixty years old, and his literary manner was well formed. He continued to write pro-

fusely until his death, publishing "Snow-Bound" in 1866, "The Tent on the Beach" in 1867, and other volumes of verse in 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1875, 1876, 1878, 1881, 1883, 1886, and 1892, besides a revised edition of his complete writings in 1888-9, and some miscellaneous work. If an increased proportion of his better poems is found in the late volumes it is because he gave more time to themes of permanent importance, rather than because of any great development. The habit of writing rapidly and with little revision had become fixed, and he was too old to break it. He attempted no new forms and acquired but little greater skill in the old ones.

Whittier's favorite themes, aside from those connected with slavery, were events in the early history of New England, especially the persecution of the Quakers and the witches; Indian legends; the simple life of rural New England; and religious doubt and belief. The anti-slavery poems were mostly inspired by particular events—"editorials in verse," they have been aptly called. Their lack of interest now is due in part to the qualities that once made them effective—their intensity and their pertinency to questions of immediate timely interest. It must be remembered, however, that they were the best of the innumerable verses on similar themes. Even to-day it is impossible to read "The Hunters of Men," with its sarcasm and scorn, or "Massachusetts to Virginia," with its impassioned indignation, and not feel something of the stirring of the old conflict. Nominally in this group of poems, though different in character and quality, are "Ichabod," in which he expressed his grief at what he felt to be the apostasy of Webster, and "Laus Deo," his noble hymn of thanksgiving over the fall of slavery.

It is in his narrative poems that Whittier shows the greatest development. His early ambition was to write long narrative poems on American themes. This was, however, be-

**Whittier's  
Anti-Slavery  
Poems**

yond his powers. Both "Mogg Megone" and "Moll Pitcher" were failures; and the author turned to the form of verse in which he excelled, the short and simple ballad.

**Whittier's  
Narrative  
Poems**      The majority of his ballads, like "Mabel Martin," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," "Barbara Frietchie," and most of the tales in "The Tent on the Beach," have an historical or legendary origin, but some of the most effective, such as "Telling the Bees" and "Maud Muller," are creations of fancy expressing some elemental emotional experience. All those mentioned are simple stories simply told; "The Sisters" shows that if need be he could produce a dramatic effect.

Whittier's powers of description are seen to advantage in the narrative poems. His handling of descriptive background in poems like "Telling the Bees" is unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in American verse.

**Whittier's  
Powers of  
Description**      His purely objective poems of nature are hardly as good; but some of those in which there is a strong subjective element must be ranked, with his ballads, as his finest work. Such are "Sunset on the Bear-Camp," "The River Path," "A Sea Dream," "The Barefoot Boy," and, greatest of all, "Snow-Bound." In these, as in the ballads, the chief characteristic is absolute naturalness and fidelity to nature and to human life, without reference to artificial conventionalities. Everywhere in Whittier as in Burns the reader is struck by conversational turns of phrase, homely figures of speech, which would be fatal if used with the slightest affectation, but which constitute one of the chief charms of the verse.

God's colors all are fast,

from "Sunset on the Bear-Camp" may serve as an illustration.

The religious verses are not great poetry, but they express the genuine spiritual emotions of a simple and devout man.

Quakerism, long a despised faith, found itself in many respects in harmony with the new transcendental spirit of

**Whittier's  
Religious  
Verse**

New England, and the poet's expressions of quiet trust in the Divine had an especial charm for those who had reached a belief in the Inner Light by the troubled way of German philosophy. Whittier's true attitude is indicated by the familiar stanza from "The Eternal Goodness:"

I know not where His islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond His love and care.

In other poems he showed just enough questioning to prove that he was intellectually alert in the midst of the nineteenth century; but serious religious doubt he probably never felt. His fondness for subjects connected with the Holy Land is a curious illustration of his old-fashioned attitude toward religious matters. It is noticeable that though he was a Quaker the hymnbooks of most denominations contain more of his hymns than of those by any other American poet.

The three volumes of prose in Whittier's collected writings contain some meritorious work, but little that would have been reprinted if it had not been for the author's reputation as a poet. Most important from a literary standpoint is "Margaret Smith's Journal," a painstaking piece of work which aims to recreate, by means of a slight fictitious narrative, something of colonial New England. It introduces the author's favorite topics of slavery, the Quakers, and the Indians, and its thread of tragic romance implies a provincial distrust of those who came from the gayer social life of England. Some of the lighter sketches, such as "Yankee Gypsies," and "The Fish I didn't Catch," are pleasant reading. The author's first anti-slavery utterance, "Justice and Expediency," is in a height-

**Whittier's  
Prose Writings**

ened oratorical manner, and presents both the moral and the practical arguments against slavery with great intensity. The Portraits, Sketches, Historical Papers, Criticisms, etc., are mostly unimportant articles collected from magazines.

In both his limitations and his excellences Whittier was representative of rural New England. In many ways his life was narrow. He never travelled. His education as a boy was slight and he never owed much to books. Most of the greater works of English literature influenced him little and those of other literatures not at all. His Quaker training restricted him in many ways. He had no knowledge or appreciation of music; he never entered a theatre; he seems to have cared little for painting and sculpture; and it is doubtful if he ever fully appreciated the value of form in poetry. His own metres are simple and few in number, and he rarely attempted anything so slightly artificial as the sonnet. He had a characteristic love of the didactic, and showed his limitations in the remark that the "Psalm of Life" was "worth more than all the dreams of Shelley and Keats and Wordsworth." Indeed, the fact that his moral was stronger than his artistic sense accounts directly and indirectly for his chief deficiencies, his commonplaces, his careless rhymes, and all the crudities due to haste and lack of revision.

Whittier's good qualities were equally typical of his class and his environment. He had the seeing eye and the feeling for the picturesque that are natural to a race of intelligent men who know life from observation rather than from books. He had all the New England shrewdness, idealism, belief in democracy, and devotion to truth. From these characteristics came his accuracy and vividness in description, his knack of story-telling, his mastery of the forms of language and of verse that make

#### Whittier's Limitations

#### Whittier's Excellences



a strong, simple appeal, and the high moral quality that is everywhere present in his poems.

It is because New England ideals have, in the course of national development, become common to so many sections of the country that Whittier has good claim to be called the most representative American poet. Though the life detailed in "Snow-Bound" and "Maud Muller" is long a thing of the past, a large part of the American people still hold the Quaker farmer's ideas of the independence and dignity of labor, and still feel, though reason may tell them differently, that a union between the Judge and the barefoot maiden would have been neither impractical nor unwise. Conditions change, and Americans are no doubt coming to read "Maud Muller" as Englishmen read of King Cophetua and the beggar maid. For the many who have taken it, or still take it, as a literal commentary on life, Whittier has spoken better than any other poet.

The author's personality also aided in giving him the character of a national representative. Strong as was his indignation over slavery, and bitter as were his denunciations, he never seemed to be actuated by selfish motives, or to harbor personal ill-feeling. His desire to do absolute justice is illustrated by his care that "Ichabod" should be followed in his poems by "The Lost Occasion," in which he expresses a more charitable opinion of Webster; and by the note in which he showed his anxiety lest "Skipper Ireson's Ride" might perpetuate a tradition that did injustice to a man long dead. Probably no other abolitionist uttered such strong words and aroused so little personal hostility. His gentleness, his obvious genuineness, his dignified simplicity, his adherence to the forms of Quakerism, even his bachelor loneliness, separated him from other men, and made him appear as the world feels a poet should; and as the man shows in all his works, these

same characteristics still seem to make him typical of the best in old New England, if not in the nation at large.

The greatest orator of the anti-slavery cause, Wendell Phillips (1811-1884), was the descendant of an old and aristocratic New England family. He was graduated from Harvard college and Harvard law school, and opened an office in Boston. When he identified himself with the abolitionists he fully realized that he was sacrificing social position and professional success. He first attracted attention in 1837 when at a meeting in Faneuil Hall he made a sudden and dramatic reply to a speech by the attorney-general of the commonwealth, who had defended the mobbing of Lovejoy, an abolitionist editor in Illinois. From this time until emancipation was secured he was constantly active, speaking wherever he could be heard. Besides his anti-slavery addresses he delivered lyceum lectures on other topics. Even before the close of the war he was interested in woman's suffrage and teetotalism, and after the slave was freed he supported various extreme theories of reform.

As an abolitionist Wendell Phillips excites admiration for the moral and physical courage that he displayed, and deserves credit for accomplishing much in behalf of his cause. As an orator he had, according to tradition, wonderful influence over an audience. As a man of letters he was of less importance. It is, indeed, hard to see on reading his speeches what constituted their power. They usually begin tactfully; some of them, like that on Toussaint l'Ouverture, contain highly wrought passages much in vogue for school and college declamations; and a few, like the plea for the removal of Judge Loring, show skilful and logical reasoning. Most of them, however, appeal to the prejudices of the hearers, and are only clever and rather specious in argument, though apparently the work of a man who was not deliberately insincere.

His most famous lyceum lecture not on a controversial topic, "The Lost Arts," contains some history and science, partly false, so stated as to produce an eminently heightened effect. Indeed, many of his addresses give the reader an impression of unintentional distortion to make an effective case.

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891) belongs partly to the anti-slavery writers and partly to the group of New Englanders who were in the largest sense men of letters. His interests were wide, and he wrote on many themes; but he gave, though not quite so completely as Whittier, some of his best years to the support of abolitionism. He was born in Cambridge in 1819, almost a half-generation after the other New England writers of first rank. His family was one of considerable distinction. One member founded the town of Lowell, Massachusetts, another established the Lowell Institute in Boston. His father was pastor of the West Church, Boston. James Russell Lowell was the youngest of six children. He inherited from his mother an imaginative disposition, and he grew fond of reading imaginative books—among the earliest being Scott's tales and the *Faerie Queen*. He was fortunate in having among his playmates boys like the Danas, William Wetmore Story, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson. In 1834 he entered Harvard college, where he read much in his own fashion, formed friends among the literary set, and edited the college magazine, but neglected such of his studies as were unattractive to him. The faculty showed him the leniency with which faculties are likely to treat a bright and wholesome boy who insists on doing things in his own way, but at last his record grew too bad. It was apparently the sum of many minor delinquencies rather than any one serious act that led to his "rustication" in his senior year. This old-fashioned punishment consisted in placing the culprit in the family of some scholarly country clergyman, who furnished board, lodg-

ing, instruction, and exhortation. In this case the place of banishment was Concord.

After receiving a degree Lowell hesitated in the choice of a profession. He considered the ministry, law, business, even medicine. The final decision was law, and he was graduated from the Harvard Law school in 1840. In college he had been a careless, sentimental youth, with a tendency to be mildly satirical, perhaps to affect the blasé. While at Concord he had refused to take Emerson seriously, and in his class-day poem had satirized him and the abolitionists. He would inevitably have changed as he became older, but the change was hastened by his acquaintance with Maria White. This young woman was of the more spiritual New England type, a writer of verses, and a reformer who dared at that early date to appear on the public platform, yet who kept the most perfect modesty and girlish womanliness. Lowell had met her while he was agitated over the choice of a profession, and about the time of his graduation from the law school they became engaged. It is significant of the young people themselves and of the idyllic society in which they lived that their love-letters were passed about among their many friends that others might enjoy their happiness.

Miss White stimulated Lowell to greater literary productiveness and interested him in the anti-slavery reform. His first volume of verse, which appeared a year after their betrothal with the significant title of *A Year's Life*, consisted mostly of love poems. But few of these have been preserved in the author's collected works. At this time he was nominally practicing law, but really occupying himself with contributing to the magazines and lecturing a little. Besides poems he published a series of papers on the "Old English Dramatists" in the "Boston Miscellany," and a prose tale, "My first Client." In 1843 he

**Maria White—  
Lowell's  
Engagement**

**Lowell's Early  
Literary Work**

joined with his friend Robert Carter in founding a magazine of his own, "The Pioneer." This lasted but three months, and left the proprietors in debt, but it is valuable as illustrating the remarkable selective ability which Lowell always showed as an editor. The three numbers contain contributions by Poe, Story, Hawthorne, Neal, Jones Very, and others then inconspicuous who have since won fame.

In 1844 Lowell was married, and lived for the winter in Philadelphia and afterward at the family home, Elmwood, in Cambridge. He had little money, and like Hawthorne in the early days of his married life found it difficult to make ends meet. In the year of his marriage he published another collection of poems, containing among others "Prometheus" and the "Legend of Brittany." The next year he issued his first volume of prose, *Conversations on some of the Old Poets*. In 1846 he became a regular contributor to the "Anti-Slavery Standard," and in this year he wrote the first of the "Biglow Papers." These were published in newspapers, and in 1848 collected into a volume. The year 1848, the most important in Lowell's literary life, also saw the publication of the "Fable for Critics," "The Vision of Sir Launfal," and another volume of poems. In the hope of reviving Mrs. Lowell's failing health the family went abroad in 1851, but the benefit was slight, and she died in 1853. Four children had been born to them, of whom but one survived the mother. The record of these joys and sorrows may be traced in some of the father's finest poems.

In 1855 James Russell Lowell was chosen to deliver the Lowell Institute lectures at Boston, and the indirect result of his success was his appointment to succeed  
**Lowell**  
**Professor at**  
**Harvard** Longfellow as Smith professor of modern languages and literatures at Harvard. Before entering upon his duties he went abroad to study, spending most of his time in Germany. In 1857 he



was married to Miss Frances Dunlap. The same year he became editor of the "Atlantic Monthly."

The "Atlantic Monthly" was planned as a medium of expression for the literary men of New England who were in sympathy with the new movements for reform and the new social tendencies. Among its early contributors were Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Holmes, J. T. Trowbridge, T. W. Higginson, Mrs. Stowe, and a little later Hawthorne and many others. Before this time the only important New England magazine had been the "North American Review," and this, through fear of injuring its subscription list, had become a trimmer on all political and social questions. Under Lowell's editorship the "Atlantic" at once achieved a preëminence never before or since attained by an American magazine, and for many years afterward represented what was best in American literature.

**Lowell's  
Contributions  
to Magazines**

Lowell retained the editorship of the "Atlantic" until 1861, when he surrendered it to James T. Fields, of the firm of Ticknor and Fields, which had purchased the magazine. In 1863 he became one of the editors of the "North American Review," and succeeded in making it a live periodical with real opinions. His prose contributions to the "Atlantic" and the "North American" were both literary and political, the political being in the early years the more important. Most of his greater critical essays were written after the war was finished, and reconstruction was well under way. Since the "North American" did not publish verse his poems were printed in the "Atlantic." In 1862, after repeated solicitation, he began in the "Atlantic" a second series of "Biglow Papers," and continued them at intervals until 1863.

In 1864 Lowell collected a volume of prose miscellanies which was issued as *Fireside Travels*—a fanciful title which, like those of later collections, was chosen by the publisher,



not by the author. In 1865, at the services held in honor of the sons of Harvard who died in the Civil War, he read his "Commemoration Ode," considered by many critics his poetical masterpiece. In 1868 appeared a collection entitled *Under the Willows*, and in 1870 a long poem, *The Cathedral*. Two volumes of critical essays, the first series of *Among my Books* and *My Study Windows*, were published in 1870 and 1871 respectively.

**Lowell's Later Writings**

In 1872 Lowell resigned the editorship of the "North American Review," secured a respite from his professorial duties, and went to Europe for two years. On his return to America he wrote for the "Nation" some satirical verse on the political morals of the country in which he came as near as his geniality allowed to showing ill-nature. This resulted in unpleasant criticism, and was the first occasion of the absurd charge, often repeated, that Lowell was losing his Americanism. In 1876 he took an active interest in the campaign, and was delegate to the national convention and presidential elector. After the election of President Hayes he was appointed minister to Spain, where he served for three years. In 1880 he was promoted to the Court of Saint James, and represented the United States there until he was recalled by President Cleveland in 1885. In Spain he made an efficient minister, but was out of the main current of events. In England he succeeded as no American before him had done in being ambassador not only to the court but to the literary and social circles of the country. He developed great powers as an occasional speaker, and was everywhere in demand.

**Lowell's Political Activities**

The second Mrs. Lowell died in the year of his recall from England, and after his return to America he made his home with his married daughter, first at Southborough, Massachusetts, then in the family residence at Elmwood. For the

summers he usually went to England. In 1887 he again delivered the Lowell Institute lectures, choosing as a subject

his favorite theme, the Old English Dramatists. These lectures were printed in 1892.

**Lowell's Last Years**

Other late volumes were *Democracy and other Addresses*, 1886, *Heartsease and Rue*, 1888, *Political Essays*, 1888. For many years he had been troubled with gout, and after suffering hopelessly from a complication of troubles he died in 1891. He had almost prepared for the press another collection of essays, and this was issued soon after his death. In 1893 appeared two volumes of his letters edited by Charles Eliot Norton.

These volumes of letters give a delightful view of Lowell's life and personality, and afford the best means of knowing

an author whose works can be appreciated only by those who have formed the acquaintance of the man himself. In boyhood he was

**Lowell's Personality**

bright and interesting, and already showed some of the traits of the man. In college he was one of those brilliant but irrepressible youths who are admired not for what they do, but for what they are and what they seem capable of doing. At this early age he had developed the habits, which he always retained, of an omnivorous reader and a bibliophile. In these years and those just following he had great aspirations and great though not unpleasing confidence in himself. As his acquaintance with Maria White brought out what lay deeper in his nature he came to sympathize strongly with the anti-slavery movement, and sacrificed something by allying himself with the unpopular cause. At this time he was a mystic, seeing visions, and even feeling that he received direct revelations from God. Life dealt somewhat harshly with him, and it is in connection with his troubles and sorrows that his sweetness of character is best shown. It is pathetic to note the change from his enthusiastic confidence in his future as a

poet to his questioning dissatisfaction with all his later work. There were no sudden transitions in his life, but he passed gradually from the buoyant hopefulness of "The Vision of Sir Launfal" and the rollicking humor of the "Fable for Critics" to a calmer though no less genial view of life. His diplomatic and social successes came in his later years, the proper though unexpected reward of what had gone before. Through all he appears the same—whimsical, kindly, a man of the world in the better sense, but as stern as his Puritan ancestors in his devotion to moral truth.

Lowell's earliest writing was in verse. He made rhymes in his boyhood, and in college his capabilities were recognized when he was chosen to write the class poem. **Lowell's Early Verse** He was a student of the English poets, and his early work was often little more than a mosaic of phrases suggested by his reading. In the poems from his first volume the chief influence seems to be that of Tennyson. "The Sirens" suggests "The Lotos-Eaters:"

The sea is lonely, the sea is dreary,  
The sea is restless and uneasy;  
Thou seekest quiet, thou art weary,  
Wandering thou knowest not whither;—  
Our little isle is green and breezy,  
Come and rest thee! O come hither,  
Come to this peaceful home of ours,  
Where evermore

The low west wind creeps panting up the shore  
To be at rest among the flowers;  
Full of rest the green moss lifts,  
As the dark waves of the sea  
Draw in and out of rocky rifts,  
Calling solemnly to thee.

There is even a closer imitation of Coleridge in,

From the close-shut windows gleams no spark,  
The night is chilly, the night is dark;

and there are obvious echoes of Shelley, Keats, Southey, and others. This imitation grows less noticeable as time passes,

but some of the later poems suggest Browning and Matthew Arnold. In the early published poems there is no touch of humor, though the letters of this time show that Lowell often scribbled verses that were full of fun. There is much on love and woman, something on the grave problems of life and the mission of the poet, relatively little on nature. In the poems written between the appearance of *A Year's Life* and the author's flowering year of 1848 there is more variety, often more power. Here come "Prometheus" with its radical democracy, "To a Pine-Tree," "To the Dandelion," and "Beaver Brook" with their nature descriptions, the ringing verses of "The Present Crisis," and the restrained expressions of personal grief in "The Changeling" and "She Came and Went."

The earliest work to attract much public attention was the first series of the "Biglow Papers," begun in the "Boston Courier" in 1846, and continued in the "Anti-Slavery Standard" until 1848. In their original form these were poems in the Yankee dialect satirizing the Mexican War and the policy that favored it. The elaborate setting in which these poems are now found was added when they were collected in 1848. Some of the best things in the "Papers" are in this later part—the "Notices of an Independent Press," the rambling introduction by the Reverend Homer Wilbur, and the notes interspersed throughout. The additions, however, tend to obscure the fact that the original design was wholly political. As the "Papers" now stand they satirize log-rolling literary criticism, later tendencies in verse, the pedantry and mild weaknesses of the New England clergy, the popular enthusiasm for Carlyle, and many other things. The greatest fault is that there is too much of this added material. Lowell never knew when to stop fooling, once he had begun. No other writer ever prepared a whole glossary

**The Biglow  
Papers—  
First Series**

as a joke. It is a less serious fault that the characters are none of them consistent. Birdofredom Sawin is so much of a clown that we hardly expect him to be true to real life. Hosea Biglow himself is always the same in his political beliefs, but not in form of expression. His faults of spelling are much more exaggerated in some poems than in others, and occasional passages employ a learned diction quite impossible for a rustic like Hosea. Parson Wilbur shows the greatest inconsistencies of all. At times he is a ludicrous caricature of a narrow pedantic clergyman, at times a pathetic old conservative, at times he is identical with Lowell himself. The use of dialect is explained partly by the author's interest in the peculiarities of local New England speech, partly by the fact that it gives greater freedom of expression. Audacities like those in the last lines of the following stanza would be intolerable in plain English:

Ez fer war, I call it murder,—  
 There you hev it plain an' flat;  
 I don't want to go no furdur  
 Than my Testymnt fer that;  
 God hez sed so plump an' fairly,  
 It's ez long ez it is broad,  
 An' you've gut to git up airly  
 Ef you want to take in God.

Dialect was also favorable to the introduction of humor, always a necessity in effective political satire.

The second series of the "Biglow Papers" differs from the first chiefly in being less spontaneous. The Lowell of 1862 was more of a philologist and less of an enthusiastic reformer than the Lowell of 1846.

**Biglow Papers—  
 Second Series**

The long introduction to the second series is signed by J. R. L. in his proper person, and is wholly serious. "The Courtin'," Lowell's only important dialect poem outside the "Biglow Papers" proper, is repeated from the Introduction to the first series, carefully enlarged to nearly twice its original

bulk. The poems of the series as they appeared in the "Atlantic" show a tendency to wander from strictly political themes, as if to experiment with the possibilities of dialect verse. Indeed, certain pastoral and descriptive passages were adapted from an abandoned narrative poem, "The Noonning." The extravagances attributed to Birdofredom Sawin seem, to a later day reader, less pleasing than those of the earlier series. Some effective lines of Yankee colloquialisms are, however, unexcelled. "Jonathan to John" is full of them:

Who made the law thet hurts, John,  
*Heads I win,—ditto tails?*  
 "J. B." was on his shirts, John,  
 Unless my memory fails.

We own the ocean, tu, John:  
 You mus'n' take it hard,  
 Ef we can't think with you, John,  
 It's jest your own back-yard.  
 Ole Uncle S. sez he, "I guess,  
 Ef *thet's* his claim," sez he,  
 "The fencin'-stuff'll cost enough  
 To bust up friend J. B.,  
 Ez wal ez you an' me!"

The "Fable for Critics" illustrates two of the author's chief characteristics—his ability to form a correct estimate of an

#### The Fable for Critics

author from his early work, and his inability to stop joking when the reader has had enough.

The parts of the work best known are the critical estimates of contemporary writers. A few of these show personal bias—Lowell over-praises his fellow-abolitionist Mrs. Child, he shows his personal dislike of Margaret Fuller, and he is rather patronizing in his attitude toward the Knickerbocker writers. Most of his judgments are, however, those of posterity, though often, as in case of Hawthorne, he was characterizing writers who had not done their best work. It is doubtful if many persons read the whole poem, with its



rhymed title-page and preface, and its rambling fable of Apollo, into which are brought innumerable puns, and discussions of all sorts of things, even capital punishment. On every page are clever lines, but the whole is too long and too hard to follow.

There is a striking difference between the "Vision of Sir Launfal," which also appeared in 1848, and either the "Big-low Papers" or the "Fable for Critics." The "Vision" was undoubtedly suggested by Ten-nyson's treatment of the Grail legend. Its great popularity is due to its obvious moralizing and to the presence of some fine nature-descriptions. It is, however, lacking in originality of both idea and expression, and it shows great unevenness of execution. In the famous passage on June there are prosaic lines like,

The flush of life may well be seen ;

and close to the perfect characterization,

Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,

is the ridiculous metaphor :

But the wind without was eager and sharp,  
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp.

The poem is said to have been written hurriedly, and it was evidently the product of one of those periods of spiritual exaltation that sometimes came to Lowell.

"The Unhappy Lot of Mr. Knott," which appeared in 1850, is worth notice only as the worst example of the extremes to which the author could go in punning. In his later poems he excelled in his appreciations of nature, and in short finished poems of sentiment. The poems "Under the Willows" and "Pictures from Appledore" are representative of one class, "For an Autograph," "Auf Wiedersehen," and "Monna Lisa" of the other. The "Harvard Commemoration Ode" is his most ambitious

**The Vision of  
Sir Launfal**

**Lowell's Later  
Poems**

production and has called forth various judgments. It is probably safe to say that it ranks well among the occasional poems written in the English language during the last half of the nineteenth century, but it is not one of the world's great odes. It has many sonorous passages and many quotable lines which, after all, do not seem to get themselves quoted. The best known section, that on Lincoln, was not part of the original poem.

"The Cathedral," reminiscent of a day spent at Chartres years before, is the only long poem in which Lowell treats the great changes in religious thought during the century in which he lived. It has some effective lines, but is strangely inconsistent in tone, and as a whole leaves an unsatisfactory impression. The last volume of verse, *Heartsease and Rue*, contains many sonnets to persons, and other minor poems, and some earlier pieces not included in former volumes. The long poem on the death of Agassiz, written in 1874, treats in a reminiscent way of the Cambridge men that Lowell knew, and has a personal interest. "FitzAdam's Story," which had originally been published in the "Atlantic Monthly" for 1867, is all that was written of a proposed series of verse tales. It is partly in dialect of a less pronounced order than that of the "Biglow Papers."

Lowell's prose writings consist of political and literary essays and a few miscellaneous papers. All the political essays

which he cared to have preserved are contained in a thin volume which he compiled late in life.

**Lowell's  
Political Essays** With but one or two exceptions the papers in this collection were written during the period of Civil War and reconstruction, and first appeared in the "Atlantic" or the "North American." There is no representative of the earlier contributions to the "Anti-Slavery Standard," and other reform publications, and but a small part of what he wrote at a later time. Even the few essays that were chosen for preser-

vation were edited and revised, some of them with a resulting confusion of tenses; so that they occasionally seem like prophecy written after the fact. This selection and revision was no doubt wise. During the early part of his life Lowell considered that his mission was poetry, and prose was but an unimportant avocation. In later years his most carefully written articles had, in order to be immediately effective, some of the qualities that make against permanency. The few selected essays give an adequate idea of his method and of his principles.

Chief among these principles is a faith in democracy, based on faith in mankind. His confidence in the soundness of the American idea did not, however, blind him to American faults. In his later essays, such as that on "The Place of the Independent in Politics," he shows his appreciation of American shortcomings with almost unpleasant frankness. His idealism led him to argue from general truths rather than from expediency, even where practical questions were most imminent. His whimsicality led him to indulge in puns and digressions, even in the discussion of the most serious subjects. He played on the name of a Southern statesman to entitle one of his most earnest essays written during the War "The Pickens and Stealin's Rebellion." His candor and fairness showed itself now and then in some surprisingly frank statement; and his moral enthusiasm is often expressed in passages of strong, almost impassioned, prose.

Lowell's first volume of literary criticism was *Conversations on some of the Old Poets*, published in 1845. He chose this old-fashioned form in which to present his opinions because it gave him the chance for a rambling treatment without apparent lack of unity. His later literary essays, though in more conventional form, are still conversations, or rather monologues, on the

**Lowell's  
Political  
Principles**

**Lowell's  
Critical Essays**

greater writers. He rarely discussed his contemporaries, and—strangely in view of his sure editorial judgments—when he did he was not at his best. His essays on Percival and Thoreau are unsound and unfair. When he professed to review a recent book he wrote an essay, after the English fashion, on some subject which the book suggested. He was a wide reader and he early acquired the habit of making marginal and flyleaf annotations. When he undertook an essay on Dante, or Chaucer, or Shakespeare, his own copies of these masters contained an abundance of suggestions. The disadvantage was that these marginal annotations, made at different times and in different moods, led to a rambling method of treatment, and sometimes to abrupt changes of tone. There is, however, usually an underlying plan to the essay, and a certain consistency is secured by the reappearance of a few favorite ideas. Among these are his faith in democracy, a punctiliousness regarding certain matters in the form of prose, an aversion to the exaltation of the Saxon element in the language, an insistence on the legitimacy of the American idiom, a tendency to depreciate what America has done in literature, and a habit, more common now since the vogue of Matthew Arnold, of adopting the comparative method in discussing English literature. One of his peculiarities in method is that of referring to obscure and unheard of authorities in a manner that sometimes seems pedantic, and that is often unilluminating and wearisome. This is shown in an essay like "New England Two Centuries Ago," which is nominally a review of two historical works. Another peculiarity is the unexpected introduction of quips, puns, and odd turns of phrase. Thus, in the essay on Shakespeare, he remarks in the midst of an otherwise serious and straightforward passage: "Shakespeare himself has left us a pregnant satire on dogmatical and categorical aesthetics (which commonly in discussion soon lose their ceremonious tails

and are reduced to the internecine dog and cat of their bald first syllables)." These whimsical expressions are less noticeable in the later prose. With the peculiarities of the essays that have been mentioned goes naturally their chief virtue—that they are the frank, genuine expression of opinion and feeling by a scholar who is at the same time a whole-souled lovable man. It is a mistake to read the essays without thinking as much of the author as of the subject.

The only volume of miscellaneous essays is the *Fireside Travels*, made up in 1864 of papers that had been published in magazines. The first and the best of the collection is "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago," in which the author recalls boyish memories of his native village. "The Moosehead Journal" is a rather dull account of a journey into the Northern woods. The greater part of the volume is made up of reminiscences of Italian travels with his friend W. W. Story. These are somewhat thin and are full of traveller's Italian phrases and of references to happenings of little interest to anyone except the participants. Better than anything in this collection are "My Garden Acquaintance" and "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners," in the volume *My Study Windows*. The first of these is an especially charming out-of-door essay, showing as well as any of the poems the author's close observation of nature. The second, on a more patriotic theme, contains some of his finest humor.

During the later years of his life Lowell suffered from overpraise, due partly to his diplomatic and social successes abroad, partly to the fact that he was the most available man for Harvard and literary Boston to set up as an idol. At this time it became customary to designate him as "the greatest American man of letters." When he died he left so delightful a memory that it is still hard to determine just how

Lowell's  
Miscellaneous  
Essays

Lowell's  
Permanent  
Rank

much this phrase means. Even in the future the critic who forms the acquaintance of his charming personality through the *Letters* will be tempted to rank his writings higher than they deserve. It seems, however, that his poetry, the work by which he set the greatest store, has not the qualities that will give permanency. Notwithstanding its high ideals it is too commonplace in thought and far too imitative in form. Lowell never succeeded, except in his dialect verse, in developing an individual manner. Some of the nature poems will long delight those who enjoy descriptive verse, the "Vision of Sir Launfal" will appeal to those who love a poetic allegory, and the "Commemoration Ode" will hold its place among American patriotic poems—but the verse as a whole hardly makes the same popular appeal as that of Longfellow and Whittier, while it just lacks the perfection that would endear it to the scholar.

The prose has been dismissed by one of the greatest American critics with the remark that it "is of a transitory nature, and steadily grows less interesting." This is no doubt true of the political writings; if it is true of the critical essays it is because they contain so much of the author that they are valuable only to those who know his personality. It seems likely that they will long continue to be suggestive, though they will no doubt lose much of their popularity as the traditions of Lowell the man fade away.

It is unfortunate that whimsical lapses of taste mar the perfect form of all but the latest writings in both verse and prose. In the poems there are not only prosaic lines such as have been cited from the "Vision of Sir Launfal," but such eccentricities as:

**Lowell's Lapses  
of Taste**

I waited with a maddened grin  
To hear that voice all icy thin  
Slide forth and tell my deadly sin  
To hell and heaven, Rosaline!



in the midst of a serious impassioned lyric. In the prose there are puns, flippant digressions, allusions to unheard of men and things, and pedantic exhibitions of vocabulary, as in the following from *Fireside Travels*:

By and by, perhaps, enough observations will have been recorded to assure us that these recurrences are firmamental, and histrionomers will have measured accurately the sidereal years of races. When that is once done, events will move with the quiet of an orrery and nations will consent to their peridynamis and apodynamis with planetary composure.

Such peculiarities as these may be pardoned, or even enjoyed by the author's friends, but they repel the disinterested reader who loves artistic work for its own sake.

The writings of Lowell that have most chance of life are probably the "Biglow Papers." These are without question the greatest American political satire, and they show better than anything else the author's originality. It may safely be predicted that they will live in American political history as other political satires have lived; and they are fairly well known abroad, where it is customary to refer to Lowell as an American humorist. But after a generation such writings are little read except by the special student—it is their fame, and not themselves, that survives. In this case the dialect, now obsolete in the community where the author heard it spoken, may aid in hastening oblivion.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that the promise of enduring literary fame is not the only praise that can be bestowed upon a man of letters. The greater part of Lowell's life and energy was given to affairs of his own time, and his influence on his contemporaries, if not his published works, gives him a place in the literary history of his country. As political reformer, as editor, as teacher, above all as an example of the type of scholarly gentleman that the new world was able to produce, he perhaps did more than any of his

**Lowell's Most  
Lasting Work**

contemporaries to dignify American literature at home and to win for it respect abroad.

Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911), the last survivor of the distinguished group to which he belonged, was a man of interesting personality and no small ability. He was a graduate of Harvard, and preached for a time, but gave up his pulpit because of his transcendental and anti-slavery views. He took part in attempts to rescue fugitive slaves, aided in the strife to keep Kansas free, and had sympathetic knowledge of John Brown's Virginia campaign. In 1862 he entered the war, and was later colonel of the first black regiment organized. After two years he was forced to leave the service on account of wounds, and for the rest of his life devoted himself mainly to literature and to the woman's suffrage movement. He published a great variety of works—poems, biographies, histories, and essays. As a controversialist he was saved from tediousness by a touch of humor, and his literary and miscellaneous essays are often charming in manner. Perhaps his most valuable work is found in his autobiography, which bears the apt title of *Cheerful Yesterdays*, and in some of the many late essays in which he gives reminiscences of the greater men he had known, and of the great happenings in which he had borne a part.

**Thomas  
Wentworth  
Higginson**

A great host of New England men and women wrote and spoke in favor of abolition, but few won a place in literary history. Mrs. Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910)

**Minor  
Abolitionist  
Writers**

was the daughter of a New York banker, but lived in Boston after her marriage in 1843.

Her early interests were in literary and philosophical studies, but the greater part of her long life was given to reforms. With her husband she edited an anti-slavery paper in Boston, and after the war she became active

in the woman's suffrage propaganda. She wrote poems, two plays, descriptions of travel, and other miscellaneous prose, and published a somewhat disappointing volume of *Reminiscences*. Her only work which is likely to live is the intense but not very intelligible "Battle Hymn of the Republic"—one of many attempts by patriotic poets to fit dignified words to the stirring tune of "John Brown's Body." Lucy Larcom (1826-1893) belongs by association with the anti-slavery group, though few of the poems preserved in her collected works touch on slavery. Her girlhood was spent as an operative in the Lowell cotton mills. For a time she lived in Illinois, but returned to Massachusetts in 1852, where she taught school and edited "Our Young Folks." She early made the acquaintance of Whittier, who often revised her writings. Her poems are short and mostly lyric, and many of the best seem like thinner echoes of Whittier's. She had a fondness for sentimental themes, such as the sailor's wife still asking for the long lost vessel; and she wrote many poems for children. Her work is fairly well sustained on the level she adopts, and if she never approaches the heights of her model, Whittier, her occasional lapses are less noticeable.

#### IV. MISCELLANEOUS NEW ENGLAND WRITERS

The New England writers still to be considered cannot be classed either as transcendentalists or as anti-slavery reformers, yet most of them had some relations with one or both of these groups. Longfellow wrote poems on slavery, Hawthorne resided at Brook Farm, and Holmes was the lifelong friend of many of the transcendentalists and wrote the biography of their chief. With none of these men, however, was political reform or idealistic philosophy the chief consideration. They represent rather the more distinctly scholarly and esthetic impulses of the "renaissance of New England."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) traced back his ancestry to John and Priscilla Alden and other passengers in the Mayflower. His father, a Harvard graduate, was a successful lawyer in Portland, where Henry was born. As a boy he showed characteristics that seem to foreshadow certain limitations of his poems. He attended public school but one week because the boys were too rough; his favorite playmates were girls; he shot off a gun but once; and he was wont to stuff his ears with cotton on the Fourth of July, that he might escape the noise. On the other hand he was a bright and intelligent boy, of excellent manners and disposition. He studied in private schools and at Bowdoin college, where he was graduated with the class of 1825. Among his fellow students at Bowdoin were Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne, and Abbott, the historian.

**Henry  
Wadsworth  
Longfellow**

**Longfellow's  
Early Training**

The Longfellow home was one of culture, with a fair library, and Henry early formed the habit of reading. His "boy's one book" was Irving's *Sketch-Book*. Of the poets we know that he read Tom Moore, Cowper, Ossian, and on Sundays Hannah More. He early began to write verse, and one of his productions was published in a local paper when he was but thirteen. While in college many of his verses appeared in the "United States Literary Gazette," and they made up a considerable part of a volume of *Miscellaneous Poems* selected from that journal in 1826. Like hundreds of other Americans he felt that the time had come for the production of a native literature. He chose this theme for his commencement piece, and he wished to devote himself to letters as a profession. His father, however, advised him to study law, and he would probably have done so if he had not by chance made a favorable impression on one of the trustees of Bowdoin college, and so received the offer of a professorship of

modern languages. The proffer of such a position to a fresh graduate seems strange now, but it must be remembered that Ticknor at Harvard was almost the only professor of modern languages in an American college, and that the salary of a professor at Bowdoin was only \$800 or \$1,000. To fit himself for the position Longfellow went abroad for three years, spending most time in France, Spain, and Italy, and a few months in Germany. After his return he taught French, Italian, and Spanish; and as textbooks were few and unsatisfactory he translated a French grammar, and edited reading books in French and Spanish. In 1831 he was married to Mary S. Potter, daughter of a neighbor at Portland. He began to contribute articles on literary subjects to the "North American Review," and he published in the "New England Magazine" "The Schoolmaster," a series of articles with an Addisonian introduction and notes of foreign scenes after the manner of the *Sketch-Book*. Some of this material was used again in *Outre-Mer*, which began to appear in numbers in 1833, and was published complete in two volumes in 1835. In 1833 he had also published in a thin volume a translation of "Coplas de Manrique."

When in 1834 Ticknor decided to resign the Smith professorship at Harvard, Longfellow was chosen as his successor.

**Hyperion** Early in the next year he went abroad, this time to perfect himself in the languages of northern Europe. He sailed to England and spent the summer in Sweden and Denmark. In Holland his wife died after a brief illness. He went to Heidelberg for the winter, and after a summer in Switzerland returned to take up his duties at Harvard. In 1839 he published *Hyperion, a Romance*, and *Voices of the Night*, a collection of poems. *Hyperion* is an idealized traveller's journal, the events of which correspond with those of the author's second visit to Europe, from the death of his wife to the end of his stay in Switzer-



land. The sub-title, "A Romance" is deserved, if at all, because of the introduction of a heroine, Mary Ashburton, whom the hero, Paul Flemming, meets in Switzerland, and whom he leaves after an ardent but unsuccessful wooing. This was a recognizable portrait of Miss Frances E. Appleton, whom Longfellow had met at the place described, and of whom he saw much in Switzerland. The more emotional scenes were presumably imaginary, but all the other details were real. This representation of a courtship on the part of a widower of but a few months, and the portrayal of real characters, seemed to many persons in bad taste, and the lady and her family are said to have been for a time displeased. Other gossip of this date pictures Longfellow as a little of a dandy, with what seemed to sedate Cambridge an over-fastidiousness and a love of gorgeousness in waistcoats. But he was successful with his classes, and he drew to himself a close circle of friends. Four of these, Professor Felton, Charles Sumner, George S. Hillard, and Henry B. Cleveland, made up with Longfellow a set known as the "Five of Clubs," or as they were nicknamed the "Mutual Admiration Society." The larger group of his friends came to include Lowell, Emerson, Holmes, and indeed nearly all the Boston and Cambridge literary men.

While *Hyperion* met with some unfriendly criticism, *Voices of the Night* was warmly received, and Longfellow again turned to poetry. His next work was in the ballad form, and in 1841 he published *Ballads and other Poems*. The next year he went abroad for his health. While confined to his berth during the stormy passage home he wrote his *Poems on Slavery*. These were published in a volume on his return, and were included in the popular edition of his works, but were omitted from a Philadelphia edition intended for Southern circulation. This omission incensed the abolitionists, as the

Longfellow's  
Return to  
Poetry



poems themselves had incensed others, and for a time the author found himself between two fires.

In 1843 Miss Appleton yielded to the protracted wooing of the poet. Her father purchased as a gift the historic Craigie

**Longfellow's** House, in which Longfellow had taken rooms  
**Domestic Life** when he first went to Cambridge, and which  
 has since been associated with his name. This

was the beginning of a period of great happiness and earnest productive work. The poet's domestic life was ideal, the circle of his friends was large and delightful, and Mrs. Longfellow's property together with his salary and the returns from his literary work enabled him to live in comfort. His works followed in rapid succession—*The Belfry of Bruges and other Poems* in 1846, *Evangeline* in 1847, *Kavanagh*, a prose romance, in 1849, *The Seaside and the Fireside* in 1850, *The Golden Legend* in 1851, *Hiawatha* in 1855, *Miles Standish* in 1858. Many of the shorter poems were first published in the magazines, particularly in the "Atlantic Monthly" after this was established in 1857. In 1854 he resigned his professorship that he might give himself entirely to literary work, and from this time the amount of his writings increased.

In 1861 the course of his life was broken by the tragic death of his wife. While she was sitting in the library with her family her dress caught fire and she was fatally burned. In his distress Longfellow tried to find distraction in completing the translation of Dante, which he had begun years before. He also published *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, 1863, and *Fleur-de-Luce*, a collection of shorter poems, 1866. *The New England Tragedies*, 1868, and *The Divine Tragedy*, 1871, were united with *The Golden Legend*, published earlier, to make up the trilogy *Christus, a Mystery*, issued in this form in 1872. Other late volumes were *Three Books of Song*, containing the second day of *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, 1873,

*The Masque of Pandora*, 1875, *Keramos*, 1878, *Ultima Thule*, 1880, *In the Harbor*, 1882. In 1868-9 Longfellow was again abroad, and during his visit to England received the degrees of LL.D. from Cambridge and D.C.L from Oxford. During his later years he lived at Craigie House, surrounded by his children and friends, receiving modestly but complacently the tributes of admiration from many readers. The long dramatic poem "Michael Angelo," which he had had by him for many years, but never fully completed, was published the year after his death.

Longfellow's character was one of great mildness, sweetness, and purity rather than of strength. He made himself widely beloved; and he took his chief enjoyment in the home circle, the library, and the quieter pleasures of life. He was strangely indifferent to the forces that were acting about him. He was a friend of Emerson and other transcendentalists, yet one might read all his writings and never suspect that a great ethical and philosophical upheaval was going on about him. He lived through the anti-slavery struggle, and always professed in a quiet way his opposition to slavery; yet his few poems on the subject were written as a diversion on a rough ocean voyage as early as 1842. In the more stirring years that followed his interest seems to have come largely second-hand through his friendship for Charles Sumner. Still more strange was his apparent indifference to art. At the time of his early journeys abroad all New England was experiencing an artistic awakening, but in poems, essays, and published letters he scarcely makes mention of a picture or a statue, and he refers to a building, if at all, only for its connection with some legend. In Florence he notices only some wax-works representing scenes of the plague, and these he ranks as "equally admirable" with Dante's poem. Even in "Michael Angelo," written late in life, he touches on art but lightly,

#### Longfellow's Character

and then only to echo commonplace criticism. His nearest approach to an adequate treatment of an artistic theme is perhaps found in the bookish dilettantism of "Keramos."

In minute scholarship Longfellow was inferior to Ticknor, his predecessor, and Lowell, his successor, in the Smith professorship. The weakness of his classics,

**Longfellow's  
Scholarship**

especially, gave critics a chance to make an absurd ado over such matters as the use of the

adjective for the adverbial form in "Excelsior," and the misquotation in the opening lines of "Jugurtha." His favorite reading was in the poets of the middle ages and Southern Europe, and he took especial pleasure in those legends which teach a truth of universal application. He left no essays of value to the careful student, but he did much to acquaint

> America with the songs, sayings, and traditions of Continental Europe.

Up to the time of his graduation from college Longfellow had sought expression in verse rather than prose. The early

**Longfellow's  
Prose—*Outre-Mer* and  
*Hyperion***

poems show smoothness of versification and simplicity of expression, and contain hints, though no obvious imitations, of Wordsworth, Moore, Bryant, and others. On his selection

for the Bowdoin professorship he relinquished the idea of writing poetry, and for ten or twelve years his chief literary activity was in prose. *Outre-Mer*, written under the influence of Southern Europe, and after the model of Irving's *Sketch-Book*, is a thin copy of a popular original. The style, at least in the opening parts, has a slight affectation of quaintness, the descriptions tend to run to adjectives, and the humor is but partly successful. The book illustrates the author's fondness for old legends, his tendency to observe persons rather than things, and his quiet moralizing. *Hyperion*, written after his second trip abroad, shows the influence of German sentimentalism. It is a less healthy book than *Outre-Mer*, and

it represents a passing mood of the author's mind rather than his real self. The style is too affected, and there is too much of a disposition to discuss the great problems of life on the part of a young man whose experience was on the whole very limited. At no other period, probably, would Longfellow have written in just this way of "Dante, Cervantes, Byron, and others; men of iron—men who have dared to breast the strong breath of public opinion," and more of the same sort.

The only later prose work aside from unimportant magazine articles was *Kavanagh*, written ten years after *Hyperion*.

**Kavanagh** This romance was suggested by the author's observations of life at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where he spent a summer. In the village school-master, whose duties keep him from the great literary work that he wishes to undertake, Longfellow evidently saw himself. The hero, Kavanagh, is a wonderful young clergyman, who quotes Maria del Occidente, and is adored by the two most charming young women of his congregation. In the end he marries one of these heroines, and the other dies of a broken heart. The book contains much admirable material in the shape of incidents of village life, but they are introduced as if from a notebook, without the vivifying touch that would make them effective. The story is not well knit together and leaves but an unsatisfactory impression.

All of Longfellow's prose work received considerable praise, and *Hyperion* was especially popular with sentimental people, some of whom it is said took it for their guide book for the Rhine, and in Switzerland traced out the exact course followed by the hero. *Kavanagh* has been commended by such diverse critics as Hawthorne and Howells. Yet it is doubtful if the names of these works would be remembered to-day if it were not for the author's fame as a poet.

This poetic fame may be said to have begun with the publication of *Voices of the Night* in 1839. Up to this time Longfellow's claims as a poet rested on some creditable juvenile pieces in the magazines and the verse translation of "Coplas de Manrique." It was in 1838-9, while in the mood that resulted in *Hyperion*, that he wrote some moralizing pieces that he called "Psalms,"—a term which he retained in the title of but one of them, the "Psalm of Life." These are in a variety of simple lyric measures, and show, in both thought and form, some influence of the German. Each presents simple reflections on some of the great problems of life, and closes, as was the author's wont, with a definite exhortation or moral lesson. It was these "psalms" that really gave popularity to the *Voices of the Night*, and that have been retained under the title of this volume in later editions. They are typical of a large group of the author's poems—the simple rhymed expression of simple, genuine aspiration and feeling. This form of poetry, whatever critical judgment may be passed upon it, is one which makes a wide appeal. Of the eight poems which, with the "Prelude," are grouped as "Voices of the Night" in late editions, all may be said to be familiar, and at least one-half are among the best known poems in the language.

In his next volume Longfellow turned to the ballad. In adopting this form he was probably influenced by the German and Norse ballads, some of which he translated. For almost the first time he followed the advice which he had earlier given to American authors, and chose distinctively American subjects. Yet "The Skeleton in Armor" and "The Wreck of the Hesperus" are in form imitations of the antique. The test of a ballad should perhaps be its popularity; and judged by this test "The Wreck of the Hesperus" must be pronounced successful.

### **Voices of the Night**

### **Longfellow's Ballads**



Yet it is untrue to life and contains an obtrusive moral that the true folk-ballad would have avoided.

The poems on slavery, written the next year, were another attempt to treat an American theme. They are simple and

**The Spanish Student**

pretty, but the inevitable comparison with Whittier's utterances on the same subject brings out their bookishness and lack of force.

"The Spanish Student," the first of several dramatic compositions, had really preceded the two last-mentioned volumes in date of writing, but was not published in book form until 1843. The story was an old one, told by Cervantes, and used by various Spanish dramatists and by Middleton. It fits well with the romantic mood in which the author found himself about the time of its composition, and gives the opportunity for some good verse, including Longfellow's best song for music, "Stars of the Summer Night."

The action, however, does not carry the reader along with it. The characters are bookish, not real. Even the speeches of the servant, Chispa, with their apt application of Spanish proverbs, seem artificial, and give the impression of excellent material unskilfully used.

In the volumes of 1845 and 1846 Longfellow continued the forms of composition which he had tried before, but in

**Evangeline** "Evangeline" he attempted a long narrative poem. The well-known story that Hawthorne

declined to use the plot, while Longfellow eagerly welcomed it, shows, if true, how well each knew his own capabilities. The mildly sentimental story, with its slight action and its pathos, was admirably suited to the poet's genius, and many of his critics consider the poem his masterpiece. In view of the fact that the descriptions have a great charm for many readers it is interesting to note that they were based on such works as the author found in his library, and on a travelling diorama of the Mississippi, the coming of which he records



in his diary as a "special benediction." He had never seen and he made no attempt to see the places which he portrays. The poem precipitated a discussion on the possibilities of English hexameters, and is still one of the best known illustrations of what may be accomplished in this metre.

The poet again turned to the middle age in the "Golden Legend," which will be mentioned later as part of the trilogy

of "Christus." In "Hiawatha" he took up another American theme. Many authors had

**Hiawatha**  
 > made use of Indian subjects, and each had been blamed either for over-idealizing his characters, or for making them so realistic as to be repulsive. Longfellow decided to write, not of individual Indians, but of the myths and traditions of the race. His material was mostly taken from Schoolcraft, who had just published the result of his researches among the Indians of the Northwest. The legends are of course selected and modified for poetic purposes. The metre, the unrhymed trochaic tetrameter, is that of the Finnish epic, the "Kalevala," and was chosen as being in keeping with the nature of the subject and the character of the Indians themselves. The metre is perhaps the most marked characteristic of the poem. Its movement took the ear, though it was often criticised as jigging and monotonous. The lack of rhyme made easy a host of parodies that complicated the discussion. The popular judgment was strongly in favor of both the content and the form of the poem, and it is still known to every one. Of late, however, it seems to make its strongest appeal to children.

The choice of these unusual metres for "Evangeline" and "Hiawatha" indicates how carefully Longfellow studied metrical effects, and how readily he adopted measures from foreign sources. His ear was not so sensitive as that of some poets, and he sometimes carried the use of a device too far, as often in

**Longfellow's  
Metrical Effects**

"Hiawatha," and in the sibilant line often quoted from "Evangeline,"

When she had passed it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music. On the other hand his taste never failed him altogether; and often his verses have a haunting quality that defies analysis, as in "My Lost Youth:"

I can see the shadowy lines of trees,  
And catch, in sudden gleams,  
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,  
And islands that were the Hesperides  
Of all my boyish dreams.  
And the burden of that old song,  
It murmurs and whispers still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

"The Courtship of Miles Standish" suggests "Evangeline" in both form and method, though it is less sentimental and probably stronger. Priscilla's answer, about which the story centers, was a tradition in the poet's family. The "Tales of a Wayside Inn" are a series of stories put in the mouths of various persons supposed to gather at the old inn at Sudbury, a favorite resort of college parties from Cambridge. The characters, whose identity is but thinly veiled, were friends of the author, the best-known being Ole Bull, the violinist, and Thomas William Parsons, the poet. The fact that the speakers represent many nationalities made it easy to introduce a great variety of stories which the author had met in his reading. But one of the tales is said to be of his own invention.

*Christus*, made up of the "Divine Tragedy," "The Golden Legend," and "The New England Tragedies," was a work by which the author set great store, but which never became popular. It is a trilogy in which Part I represents the ancient world, Part II the middle age, and Part III the present. "The Divine Tragedy"

#### Other Narrative Poems

#### Christus

is little more than a paraphrase into verse of the gospel account of Christ's life, the three acts or "passovers" each representing a year of his ministry. It seems strange that Longfellow, with his fondness for simple expression, should not have seen how far inferior his version was to the prose of the Scripture narrative. "The Golden Legend," the earliest and the most popular of the divisions of the poem, retells a story of superstition and maidenly devotion. The main events and the illustrative material are not well interwoven, and the reader feels as he often does in Longfellow's complex narratives, that material has been introduced from a notebook. The "New England Tragedies" are two, "John Endicott" and "Giles Corey." Both deal with Puritan intolerance and superstition, shown in the former in the persecution of the Quakers, and in the latter in the delusion of the Salem witchcraft. The pictures are worked up with considerable antiquarian detail, but the plots are not well organized. This is especially true of "John Endicott," where both the hero and the heroine are lost sight of at the end, and the chief interest in the plot is not resolved. In the trilogy as a whole the difference between the parts is so great that there is no sense of unity, and the representation of the present by Puritan intolerance hardly seems adequate.

The later poems of Longfellow are similar in kind and quality to those which had gone before. They include more  
 "Tales of a Wayside Inn," the dramatic poems  
 "The Masque of Pandora" and "Judas Mac-  
 cabæus," and short poems, many of them of  
 a personal nature. Among the best known of these is "The Hanging of the Crane," suggested by the home-making of the poet's friend, Thomas Bailey Aldrich. "Michael Angelo" is in dramatic form. It represents scenes in the life of the great artist and teaches the virtue of labor and single-minded devotion to art.

**Longfellow's  
Later Poems**

Short translations, chiefly lyrics and ballads, from most of the European languages, were produced throughout the poet's life. Those which were suited to his genius were both faithfully and sympathetically rendered. His most ambitious translation, that of Dante, is praised for its "elegant literalness," but the strength and power of the original were not his to give.

**Longfellow's  
Translations**

All of Longfellow's works are readable, but in searching for those on which his fame rests it is as well to discard the

prose, the dramas and dramatic poems, the translation of Dante, and most of the "Tales of a Wayside Inn." There remain "Hia-

**Longfellow's  
Rank as Poet**

watha," "Evangeline," and "Miles Standish," a few ballads and other verse narratives, and a large number of poems of human aspiration and feeling. All these live with undiminished vigor, but it is those of the last group that are best known and that constitute the poet's best claim to remembrance. If judgment is based on the number of poems that are household quotations there is no question that in America and probably in England Longfellow exceeds every modern poet in popularity. His admirers also point out that the works of no other English-speaking poet of his century have been so widely translated. It is much to be the favorite poet of so many people. But the extravagant praise which has followed this popularity has sometimes seemed to lay on the critic the necessity of calling attention to the author's limitations. These are mostly due to the character of the man, and many of them have been indicated in the preceding discussion. He lacked strength, originality, the seeing eye. He wrote from books rather than from first hand observation, and he failed to appreciate the great movements that were stirring the nation, and all deeply thinking men. On the other hand, the purity of his life, his patriotism, and the tenderness with which he sympathized with the more com-

mon trials of men and women are as fully reflected in his verse as are his defects. He never wrote an impure line, or one that would lessen the reverence of man for truth. And to the young, and to thousands of readers whose lives have fallen in quiet places, his "Psalms" bring exactly the solace and inspiration that they need. It is to be regretted that some of these poems sin against perfect art. The "Psalm of Life" would be a richer possession if its lesson had been presented effectively in less sing-song verse, and without the absurd mixture of metaphor so often pointed out:

And departing leave behind us,  
*Footprints on the sands of time;*

?      Footprints, that perhaps another,  
        *Sailing o'er life's solemn main,*  
 o      A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
        *Seeing, shall take heart again.*

Still, most of the faults in the poems are not glaring.

Few true-minded persons fail to find in Longfellow's poems something that appeals strongly to them in childhood and early youth; and fortunate are they to whom the same simple consolation and exhortation remains adequate throughout life. The man who feels the full stress of modern thought may be tempted to exclaim:

And common is the commonplace  
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain,

> but he is an intellectual snob if he fails to honor the poetry  
that he found an inspiration in his simpler days.

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), or, as he wrote it later, Hawthorne, was born in Salem. His earliest American ancestor, who came to Salem in 1637, was a man of weight in the community, and his son was one of the witch judges. The family declined in social importance, however, and for two genera-

**Nathaniel  
 Hawthorne**

tions before the birth of Nathaniel the Hathornes had been sea captains. The story of loss of title to an estate in Maine, and certain traditions regarding family temper and peculiarities, are pretty faithfully repeated in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Nathaniel's father died in 1808, and his mother, though apparently not a morbid woman, withdrew entirely from the world, living in her own room, and never sitting at table even with her children. This peculiar home life doubtless had its effect on her son. In 1818 she removed for a time to Maine, where she had relatives, and here Nathaniel rambled in the woods and, as he says, acquired his habit of solitude. Although the family were left with little means an uncle undertook the charge of his education, and he suffered no great hardships. He went back to Salem to prepare for college and in 1821 entered Bowdoin.

There seems to have been nothing unusual about Hawthorne's boyhood and college days. He had few intimates,

#### Hawthorne's Youth

but he was not a recluse, and he had his share in boyish escapades and college scrapes. His feat of printing a weekly "Spectator" with his pen at the age of sixteen, and some juvenile rhymes are hardly significant of anything more than an interest in books. His pride at the same age in learning to chew tobacco, and later in some college dissipations shows nothing but boyishness. His scholarship was fair. Among his fellow students at Bowdoin were Longfellow, Franklin Pierce, and Horatio Bridge, the last two throughout life his closest friends. It was during his last year at college that he adopted the "w" in his name.

After his graduation Hawthorne went back to Salem, where he lived twelve or fourteen years in a secluded way, entering no profession, and seeing little of the world. It is possible that he had begun *Fanshawe* while at college. If not, his earliest literary attempt was "Seven Tales of my Native



Land," a collection of short stories which he burned after trying in vain to find a publisher. In 1828 he published at his own expense *Fanshawe*, a rather melodramatic romance of college life. This attracted little attention, and he soon regretted its publication and made every effort to suppress it. After his death his family characteristically included it in his collected works. He next wrote "Provincial Tales," for which as a collection he could find no publisher, but some of which Goodrich took for use in his annual, the "Token." Among these were "The Gentle Boy," and some of the other better known "Twice-Told Tales." From this time he continued to write tales and short sketches, publishing in the "Token" and in magazines. In 1836, after he had been eleven years out of college without any regular remunerative employment, he undertook the editorship of the "American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge" at a salary of \$500. This was mere hackwork, and he did not regret that the venture soon failed. The next year he compiled for Goodrich a Peter Parley book, *Universal History on the Basis of Geography*. All this time he had published nothing over his own signature, and his name was first made known to the public through an enthusiastic notice by his friend Park Benjamin, published in a New York magazine in 1835. About this time Horatio Bridge, without Hawthorne's knowledge, gave a financial guarantee that insured the publication in 1837 of a volume of short sketches. The fact that these had been published before, most of them in the "Token," led to the adoption of the title *Twice Told Tales*. The appearance of this, his first work under his own name, tended to bring the author out of his seclusion. A stronger influence in the same direction was exerted by the Peabodys, an old Salem family, who began a systematic attempt to form the acquaintance of their recluse neighbor. The ulti-

mate result was the engagement of Nathaniel Hawthorne to the younger daughter, Sophie Peabody.

The responsibility of an engagement impressed on Hawthorne the need of doing something for a living, and through the influence of friends he secured an appointment as weigher and gauger in the Boston custom house. His duties were to watch the unloading of vessels and to keep tally of the cargo. At first he enjoyed the novelty of the occupation, but he soon sickened of it, as he always did of any systematic work. The Peabody family had removed to Boston, where they engaged in publishing and bookselling. It was probably at the solicitation of the older sister, Elizabeth Peabody, that he wrote three volumes of child's stories, *Grandfather's Chair*, *Famous Old People*, and *Liberty Tree*. These represent his only important literary work during his residence in Boston. In 1841, with the change of administration, he lost his position, and at once joined the Brook Farm community.

The Brook Farm scheme seems impractical in retrospect, yet it was carefully planned by men of business sense, and was really more promising than many of the "promoted" enterprises in which literary and professional men are every year induced to invest their money. Hawthorne was not enthusiastic over transcendentalism, though Miss Peabody and her family were, and he seems to have joined the community because he thought it the best way to provide for a home. The original plan looked to the building on the farm of cottages for married couples and he hoped soon to occupy one of these. He invested his entire savings, \$1,000, in stock, and took up his residence as a working member of the community. At first he had some slight enthusiasms, but they soon passed away, and he recorded in his journal the conclusion that "Labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it

**Hawthorne in  
Boston**

**Hawthorne at  
Brook Farm**

without being proportionably brutified." By the middle of the first summer he was sick of the whole affair, but after an absence of some weeks he returned as a boarder. He complained that the conditions were not favorable to literary work, and he produced only one short story, and another child's book, *Biographical Stories for Children*.

In the spring of 1842 Hawthorne left Brook Farm for good, and though his savings were tied up in the company, and he had no regular occupation, he was married in July, and took up his residence in the Old Manse at Concord. Glimpses of his life

**Hawthorne at  
the Old Manse**

here show an idyllic sort of existence, with the most romantic devotion on the part of the married lovers, and delightful excursions by wood and stream with Thoreau and Ellery Channing. The care of providing for a family weighed on him, and he was troubled by lack of means—just how seriously is uncertain. Through the influence of friends he at last secured the position of surveyor of customs at Salem. During his four years' residence in Concord he had written a considerable number of tales, and these he collected in 1846 as *Mosses from an Old Manse*. In the same year he

**At the Salem  
Custom House**

assumed his duties in the Salem custom house, and continued until he was removed after the change of administration in 1849. His salary was only \$1,200, but his official duties occupied only three or four hours daily. As usual, he found them uncongenial after the novelty was gone. Notwithstanding what seems abundant time he wrote very little.

Hawthorne was a non-resident when he was given one of the most important offices in the little city of Salem. His appointment came through influences not local, and though he was faithful and business-like he stood aloof from his fellow townsmen, and especially from those with commercial interests. It was natural that when a change of administra-

tion came no one should protest strongly if he fell a victim to the spoils system. He had felt, however, that his appointment was a sort of literary pension, and was not only indignant but apparently surprised that anyone should think of displacing him. His indignation was directed against the entire community of Salem, but especially against some of his associates, whom he lampooned in the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, and a Mr. Upham, whom he tried to hold up to scorn in *The House of the Seven Gables*.

In his first despondency after leaving the custom house he wrote his friend Hillard asking for the suggestion of

**Hawthorne  
Writes The  
Scarlet Letter**

“some stated literary employment, in connection with a newspaper, or as corrector of the press to some printing establishment.”

So far as is known this was the only time except during his brief editorship of the “Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge” that he ever signified a willingness to accept any systematic literary employment, or indeed any employment not political. This request was not pushed, and he began work on *The Scarlet Letter*, while the family lived on a small sum that Mrs. Hawthorne had saved from her household allowance, and on a contribution from Hillard and other friends. The time was unfavorable for literary production, for besides worrying over financial affairs he was distracted by his mother’s illness and death, and by illness in his own family. According to the well-known story *The Scarlet Letter* was planned as the leading tale in a collection of short stories, and was expanded at the suggestion of James T. Fields, the publisher. It appeared in April, 1850, and had remarkable success. Its author was at last famous.

Although Hawthorne had expressed his contempt for Salem and its people he continued to reside there until after the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*. The ill-natured per-

sonal comments on his associates in the custom house, which were introduced in the sketch prefixed to this romance, aroused an indignation that must have made life in the city unpleasant; and it was with little regret on either side that he left his native town and took up his residence in the Berkshire hills. Here, with the Sedgwicks and Herman Melville for neighbors, he lived for a year and a half. During the fall and early winter of 1850 he wrote his second romance, *The House of the Seven Gables*. Part of the next year he gave to *The Wonder Book*, which, like the *Tanglewood Tales*, published two years later, was a retelling of classic myths for children. Later in 1851 he compiled *The Snow Image and Other Twice Told Tales*, a series of sketches that had appeared in periodicals, but had not been republished. In the same year the family removed to West Newton, and afterward to Concord, where Hawthorne had bought Alcott's house, the Wayside. West Newton was near the site of Brook Farm, though this may have had nothing to do with the fact that he made the famous community the background for his next long tale, *The Blithedale Romance*, published in 1852. Shortly after his removal to the Wayside he was asked to write a campaign life of his old friend, Franklin Pierce, now a candidate for the presidency. This work had no literary importance, and is of interest mainly because of the views which it expresses on slavery and kindred matters. After his election Pierce reciprocated the favor by appointing Hawthorne United States consul at Liverpool.

For four years Hawthorne was an efficient consul, but as before he fretted under his official duties. He travelled somewhat about England, but he never really came to enjoy the country, or to have more than a half affection for its people. He did not meet the greater literary men, and he never entered, except in a formal way, into any of the

life about him. Only the salary reconciled him to his position. This, though reduced by congress during his term, enabled him to repay the gift which friends had made through Hillard, and to lay aside a sum that relieved him from fear of later want.

**Hawthorne  
Consul at  
Liverpool**

After resigning the consulate in 1857 he spent a year and a half in Italy, living for a time in Rome and in Florence. In the latter he occupied the old villa just outside the city which furnished the suggestion of Monte Beni in *The Marble Faun*. In the spring of 1859 he returned to England and took up his residence on the Yorkshire coast. He had begun another romance at Florence, and he finished it at Redcar. The next year it was published in England as *The Transformation*, and in America as *The Marble Faun*. In 1860 Hawthorne returned to Concord.

**Hawthorne in  
Italy**

The reader of Hawthorne's notebooks kept during his foreign residence is impressed with the fact that he went abroad too late in life to derive the greatest enjoyment from his travels. Until he reached middle age he had scarcely been outside New England, and he found it hard to adapt himself to new methods of life, not to mention new habits of thought. The petty annoyances of travel irritated him, and while he was never an habitual grumbler, he sometimes found it hard to be a sympathetic visitor. Italy pleased him, on the whole, more than England, yet the remark on sour bread, forced so absurdly into *The Marble Faun*, is only one of many indications that show how he dwelt on unpleasant trifles. Among the most interesting passages in the foreign notebooks are those that trace the development of his taste in art. While in England he began to visit galleries, and to analyze his appreciation and lack of appreciation, and he

**Effect of  
Hawthorne's  
Travels**



continued the process under more favorable conditions in Italy. His usual attitude is that of the man who feels that he ought to enjoy art, but who is really bored by it. Occasionally he grew enthusiastic. His appreciations were, however, erratic, and he never became quite at ease regarding such conventionalities as the nude in sculpture.

When Hawthorne returned to Concord in 1860 his career as an author was almost finished. His health was failing and he was troubled by the state of political affairs. He had never taken an active interest in politics, but he had been nominally a democrat, and he retained his old political faith, such as it was, with little change. He never came to sympathize with the anti-slavery agitation, and he wrote, "I rejoice that the old Union is smashed." Though he spoke of himself as a war democrat and a Northern man he could not but realize that he was out of sympathy with his natural associates. He published nothing concerning contemporary events except an article "Chiefly about War Matters," in the "Atlantic" for 1862. The next year he contributed to the same periodical *Our Old Home*, a series of papers compiled from the notebooks that he had kept in England. He was trying to produce another story, and he completed an instalment or two of *The Dolliver Romance* for the "Atlantic," but his power of sustained work was gone, and he died in May, 1864.

Available information regarding Hawthorne the man is less than might be desired. The chief facts of his life, as already given, are unquestioned, but it is hard to feel that one really knows his character. He was ordinarily retiring and revealed himself but little outside his family circle. He expressed the wish that no authorized biography be published, and the family refused to allow Lowell, or other competent biographers, access to the materials in their possession. Their

**Hawthorne's  
Latest Years**

**Our Knowledge  
of Hawthorne**

scruples did not prevent the son from writing *Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife, a Biography*, or the daughter and her husband from publishing various works on the father. All these books are gossipy, but exceedingly unsatisfactory. The reader is left with the uncomfortable feeling that he may be doing injustice to a man because of insufficient data.

Though in some ways representative of New England, Hawthorne seems to have lacked the energy and the sense of independence so common in his neighbors.

<b>Hawthorne's Personal Deficiencies</b>	His family was not well-to-do, and he owed his education to the bounty of a relative, yet he was content to settle down at home after leaving college, and made no serious attempt to earn his own living. Indeed, though he faithfully performed tasks that he undertook, he seems to have had an aversion to systematic labor of all sorts. Having devoted himself to literature, he apparently felt that the nation owed him a living. His attitude toward Goodrich, who really did much for him, was ungrateful and somewhat patronizing. He was indignant at his fellow-townsmen because they did not appreciate him, and at the government because it did not continue him in office. After he was removed from the Salem custom house he accepted a gift of money made up by subscription among his friends. It is true that he paid this back at a later time, and even if he had not done so there was nothing at all discreditable in his receiving such a token of esteem; but not every able-bodied and able-minded Yankee would have taken it without making stronger efforts in his own behalf.
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These apparent weaknesses, if they are such, are overshadowed by characteristics of which we are convinced by indications rather than by direct evidence. The devotion which his friends Pierce and Bridge felt for him could have been inspired only by a man who had something noble in his nature. The faithfulness with which he always per-

formed unpleasant duties is greatly to his credit. So is his manliness in refusing to withdraw the dedicatory address to his friend Pierce when the publishers protested that association with the name of that discredited statesman would ruin the sale of *Our Old Home*. In his family life he appears, even after allowance is made for some over-drawn idyllic pictures, as a man of wonderful sympathy and sweetness. It is the fact that some of these traits are not readily reconciled with others mentioned before that makes the man in his relation to his writings hard to comprehend.

**Hawthorne's  
Admirable  
Qualities**

After Hawthorne's death his family published several volumes of selections from his notebooks, and some unfinished romances. The notebooks were a combination of commonplace book and journal, in which he jotted down hints for stories, and thought and facts that might be useful, together with detailed accounts of excursions and interesting experiences. They were intended for his eye alone and the propriety of publishing them might be questioned. Still, if available as he wrote them, they would be of value to the close student of his literary art. Unfortunately they are so edited as to be almost worthless. In *Passages from the American Note-Books* omissions are not indicated, and quotations from letters are introduced without being clearly designated as such. In the *English Note-Books* passages used in the preparation of *Our Old Home*, and in the *Italian Note-Books* some of those used in *The Marble Faun* are omitted, so that there is little opportunity to study the author's method of re-working material.

**Hawthorne's  
Notebooks**

A similar criticism may be passed on the editing of the unfinished romances. There are four of these, representing as many attempts to develop ideas long in the author's mind. One of these, published as "The Ancestral Foot-Step," is a

series of studies written in 1858. The story is connected with the tradition of a bloody footprint at the entrance of Smithell's Hall, England, and involves the relation between the fortunes of an English house and a secret in the possession of an American emigrant. "Doctor Grimshaw's Secret" is another and probably a later attempt to use the same material, with the addition of a reference to the elixir of life. "Septimius Felton" makes use of the same theme. All these had been abandoned by the author, and he had determined that the final form should be that of the "Dolliver Romance." In this the idea of a bloody footprint and the international element do not occur. These fragmentary and rejected manuscripts, if printed exactly as Hawthorne wrote them, would be of interest in showing how he built up a romance. But they have, according to the editor's notes, been changed in minor but unindicated respects, evidently with the idea of improving the continuity and making them more readable. On the whole, the posthumous volumes as issued are chiefly a vexation to the student of Hawthorne, and serve little useful purpose except to swell the copyright receipts of his heirs.

The unfinished romances do, however, illustrate the persistency with which he clung to an idea which impressed him as having literary possibilities. Long before he knew the legend of Smithell's Hall he had entered in the notebooks a reference to a man whose foot left everywhere a bloody print. The thought of earthly immortality had long fascinated him, as is shown by references in the notebooks, and by the use of a similar idea in "Doctor Heidegger's Experiment." The plan of writing an Anglo-American romance occurred to him when he first thought of going abroad, and he relinquished it only after repeated trials. These unfinished narratives also show how the habit of using vague symbolism grew with years.

They contain some passages quite as powerful in their suggestiveness as anything that he ever wrote.

Hawthorne's important literary work divided itself into two groups, the short stories and sketches and the romances.

**Hawthorne's  
Short Tales and  
Sketches**      The most valuable of the former are included in three volumes, the *Twice-Told Tales*, the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, and *The Snow Image and other Twice-Told Tales*. Some of them are stories with action and plot, some are mere sketches owing their interest to the charm with which the author invests the commonplace. The stories show considerable variety, but the best of them are studies of human beings placed in some peculiar situation with reference to their fellow men, or to moral problems. Thus, "The Minister's Black Veil" shows a man who separates himself from others by wearing a symbol of the isolation of every human soul; "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" is a study of the actions of three old persons who are able, temporarily, to regain youth. "Rappaccini's Daughter" develops the conception of a woman so nurtured that her touch, or even her breath, is poison to others of her race. Though the situations which interested him involved moral problems, he rarely, as in "A Rill from the Town-Pump," wrote with the apparent purpose of teaching a lesson. In "The Gentle Boy," and a few other early stories, he approached very near the sentimentality which has been seen in some of his contemporaries. He was fond of old New England backgrounds, as in "The Gentle Boy," "The Gray Champion," "Endicott and the Red Cross," and the four "Legends of the Province House." One of the most individual characteristics of his method is his suggestiveness. This is reasonably definite in "The Great Carbuncle," "The Minister's Black Veil," "The Snow Image." In other and on the whole better tales it is indefinite—a faint symbolism, too evanescent to be analyzed, or illustrated by quota-

tions apart from the context, but plainly felt. The falling rose leaves in "The Maypole of Merry Mount" have a suggestiveness more forcible than that of obvious allegory.

The other volumes of short stories were intended for children, and though excellent of their kind are not to be ranked among the author's important work. The

**Hawthorne's  
Stories for  
Children**

most noticeable are the adaptations of old myths, in the *Wonderbook* and the *Tanglewood Tales*. It has been questioned whether such a modification of a classic story is fair or desirable. However this may be, it is interesting to notice the successful manner in which Hawthorne has eliminated all suggestion of immorality and all elements beyond the comprehension of children and still left in every case the essence of the story. In some of the myths he found an underlying moral not unlike those of his original New England tales.

After his unsuccessful attempt at a romance in *Fanshawe*, Hawthorne confined himself for more than twenty years to the short tale or sketch. It was in the creation of these smaller units that he learned what he could and could not do, and perfected his prose style. That *The Scarlet Letter* took on the proportions of a romance is said to have been due to Fields's advice. Once he learned his power in the creation of longer stories he did not care to write short ones. Either the discovery of his abilities or the sudden achievement of success stimulated him, and the years from 1850 to 1852, in which he published *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and the *Blithedale Romance*, besides miscellaneous work, were the most productive of his life.

The central idea of *The Scarlet Letter* had long been in Hawthorne's mind, and is introduced incidentally in "Endicott and the Red Cross." It is probable, though there is no direct evidence, that the story had been taking shape long before the loss of his office led him to put it on paper. The



romance is prefaced by an introduction entitled "The Custom House," and Hawthorne is quoted as saying that the vogue of the book was due to this preliminary sketch. This remark and the sketch itself show a peculiar aberration on the part of the author. When he wrote he was disaffected at the loss of his position, and this fact prejudiced his views of his co-workers who were so fortunate as to remain undisturbed. The most regrettable remarks concern "a certain permanent Inspector." Hawthorne writes of his "moderate proportion of intellect, and the very trifling admixture of moral and spiritual ingredients; these latter qualities, indeed, being in barely enough measure to keep the old gentleman from walking on all-fours;" and continues "My conclusion was that he had no soul, no heart, no mind; . . . It might be difficult—and it was so—to conceive how he should exist hereafter, so earthly and sensuous did he seem." Naturally such comments shocked the little city where the man so characterized had been generally known, and where his descendants still lived—especially since he had died before the sketch was published. In the preface to the second edition Hawthorne made matters worse, if possible, by saying: "It appears to him, that the only remarkable features of the sketch are its frank and genuine good-humor, and the general accuracy with which he has conveyed his sincere impressions of the characters therein described. As to enmity or ill-feeling of any kind, personal or political, he utterly disclaims such motives." If one accepts this statement it convicts Hawthorne of an utter lack of taste and sense of propriety. The affair was evidently one of those in which men of genius sometimes get entangled; but it is unfortunate that *The Scarlet Letter* should have been given to the world with such an introduction.

*The Scarlet Letter* is usually conceded to be the best of

the four romances. Both the theme and the setting of the story were suited to the author. The problem to which he was most strongly attracted was that of the effect of sin. The background that he used most effectively was that of early Puritan New England. In *The Scarlet Letter* he represented against this background the effect of one great sin on the four persons most intimately concerned, and on the community. The story cannot be analyzed in the ordinary fashion. There is little plot or action in the usual sense of these words. None of the characters does anything, or except for the abortive attempt to fly from New England plans to do anything. Yet there is a plot of absorbing interest, in which the events are psychological, not physical. The most successful character in the book is Hester. She is the central figure of the story, and she is a type that Hawthorne could best portray. He pictures two sorts of women—the pale, ethereal kind like Priscilla and Hilda, and the full-blooded, queenly creatures represented by Hester, Zenobia, and Miriam. It is significant that he makes the former his heroines—rather perfunctorily, as it sometimes seems; but that though the Hesters and Zenobias and Miriams all sin he really enjoys them more and paints them more successfully. Dimmesdale, Hester's partner in sin, is a trifle shadowy, as is shown by the fact that he moves some readers to pity, others only to contempt. Chillingworth, who supplies the place of the villain in a novel of action, is somewhat melodramatic in his psychology. Little Pearl gives the one touch of color in a sombre picture, and is artistically a success, though it has been questioned how far she is true to child nature. The other characters, whether viewed individually or as part of the cruel Puritan populace, are properly costumed and harmonize with the general plan.

The romance illustrates in an especial degree the peculiar

narrative methods that the author had been evolving. Symbolism is everywhere. The scarlet letter itself is introduced

**The Scarlet  
Letter—  
Narrative  
Method**

time after time, and always with a new suggestiveness. The vision of the flaming symbol in the heavens may be an artistic mistake, but the allusion to the same device on the minister's breast, with the hint at explanations not definitely given, is masterly. More intangible still are such touches as that of the rose before the prison door in the first chapter. Another peculiarity of the narrative is the telling, as if it were perfectly natural, of each character's secret thoughts. What no other person could ever know, what the characters would hardly admit to themselves, the writer narrates as frankly as the most obvious actions, and the reader never thinks of questioning. Whether or not he was a transcendentalist in avowed belief, Hawthorne proceeds in his romances on the transcendental theory that every mind can comprehend the workings of every other mind. A man of the slightest external experience, he was able to enter into the feelings of the guilty man or woman, and so to portray them that the reader knows they would be his own emotions under like circumstances. The power of analyzing dark and sin-haunted minds is a great element in his genius. With brighter and happier moods he does not succeed quite so well.

*The House of the Seven Gables* has the same New England setting, and it deals with something of the same problems

**The House of  
the Seven  
Gables**

as *The Scarlet Letter*. It is, however, thinner, and leaves a less unified impression. The action is in the present, but interest centers more in the background—in the old house itself, in the story of its origin, of the wizard Maule's curse on the Pyncheon family, and of the lost title deeds. Next in interest for many readers are the bits of seriously playful description, as of the urchin who patronizes the cent-shop, of

the chickens in the garden, of old Hepzibah herself. Last in interest is the story, with its slight thread of action, ending in the removal of the curse by the inter-marriage of the Maule and Pyncheon families. Perhaps this slight interest of the story is due in part to the fact that Hawthorne was at the same time indulging his personal animosities and revealing family traditions. The story of the curse and of the lost title deeds are from the history of the Hathornes. The portrait or caricature of Judge Pyncheon is supposed to be recognizable as the politician who was chiefly instrumental in removing the author from the custom house. This latter fact is responsible for some faults of the story. The Judge is a melodramatic villain, and the scenes in which he appears, and especially his death, are more melodramatic than is usual with Hawthorne. The portrait of Hepzibah is well drawn, and that of Phoebe is a pleasant sketch, not very fully filled in. Clifford, the victim of a great wrong, is somewhat shadowy, and to some readers is unpleasant, rather than an object of pity as the author intended. The young daguerrotypist with his up-to-date notions is not the sort of character that Hawthorne could portray well, but he plays his slight part acceptably. Uncle Venner, the gardener, is a clever conception, though inferior to Silas Foster, the farmer in Blithedale. These deficiencies in the characters are not obvious at first reading, but they help to account for the thinness and sense of unreality felt in the story. The moral problems are those of heredity rather than those of personal sin, and their relations to actual life are not definitely pointed out. Suggestiveness is everywhere present—obvious as in the degenerate brood of chickens, more subtle in Clifford blowing bubbles, or the cat stealing across the garden after Judge Pyncheon's death.

The *Blithedale Romance* differs from the other longer stories in motive, scene, and narrative method. Like the

others, it shows the effect of sin, but the sin of the hero is the somewhat strange one of selfish philanthropy—the enthusiasm of a reformer which blinds him to all other claims. The fault of the heroine is a wayward impetuosity, derived from hereditary tendencies. The motive is more nearly that of a modern “problem novel” than are the subtle studies of conscience in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun*. The book seems to be the author’s comment on the movements for reform which were all about him in the early fifties. The scene is a community which is plainly that at Brook Farm, and Hawthorne has drawn on his experiences for many of the incidents and some of the characters. Silas Foster is pictured from life, and Priscilla was clearly suggested by the little seamstress from Boston who is referred to in the notebooks. Miles Coverdale has a few of the characteristics of Hawthorne himself. On the first appearance of the book Zenobia was said to represent Margaret Fuller. However many points of resemblance may have been plain to contemporaries, the reader of to-day finds little similarity between the beautiful, passionate creature of the romance and the Margaret Fuller of the biographies. It is more likely that both Zenobia and Hollingsworth, in whom the author works out the results of their respective sins, are wholly imaginary portraits. Unlike the other romances the story is not told by a narrator who knows the secret workings of each heart, but by an eye-witness who can recount only what he observes, and draw his inferences. In spite of the modern setting and the ordinary storyteller’s method, symbolism is frequent. The flower in Zenobia’s hair is a striking example.

Critics have so frequently spoken of *Blithedale* as an inferior production that the reader who questions this judgment probably does well to keep silence; yet he may be pardoned for maintaining that the inferiority is not so great as is

sometimes charged. The problem of the book is worthy of the novelist, though the reader may not agree with his solution. The characters, with the exception of Coverdale, are as life-like a group as Hawthorne ever created. Coverdale is but lightly sketched for the same reasons that led Poe to employ shadowy narrators for many of his tales. The scene, though somewhat abnormal, is made to seem real. The story moves on to an ending that is artistically inevitable. The general impression left by the book is one of strength, though it is not wholly pleasing. Of all Hawthorne's works it is the most pessimistic, and the pessimism is all the stronger for being hinted rather than definitely expressed.

**Rank of the Blithedale Romance** *The Marble Faun* followed the other romances after a considerable interval, and was in part the result of the author's Italian experiences. His Anglo-American romance would not take shape, and he turned to an Italian-American plot. The theme resembles that of *The Scarlet Letter*, but is broader, being no less than the place of sin in the development of the soul. The scene is Italy, but the characters are Americans, or of no particular nationality. Kenyon is a New England gentleman who commands entire respect, but does not win the heart. Hilda, who has been said to be modelled after the author's daughter, is one of Hawthorne's pale, ethereal creatures. Miriam is of the other type that he loved to portray—the full-blooded, voluptuous woman, with a suggestion of the South in her nature. Donatello, though nominally an Italian, is the incarnation of primeval innocence and joyousness, rather than a definite human being.

**The Marble Faun** *The Marble Faun* has more action than the other romances, but the movement is hindered by digressions and descriptions. The fact that it has been commended as a guide book to Rome hints at its defects as a work of fiction. It is, moreover,



a guide book written by a provincial visitor, who retains his fresh enthusiasms, but who has not gained an idea of relative values. Excellent as many of the descriptions

**Defects of The  
Marble Faun**

are in themselves, they detract greatly from the effectiveness of the romance. The suggestive method, which fitted so well with the Italian background, was employed not only in details but in the resolution of the plot itself. Readers complained that the ending as originally written was unintelligible, and the author added a chapter which made no improvement.

Hawthorne shows his New England relationships more clearly than any other American author, yet he was not a typical New Englander. He cared little for

**Hawthorne and  
New England**

formal religion, and it is impossible to determine exactly what his faith was. Although he was so closely associated with the transcendental leaders he took no real part in the transcendental movement; and he had no interest in the many reforms in which New Englanders were engaged. His recurrence to the thought of sin in the world seems at first sight a Puritan characteristic, but he was concerned not with forgiveness and salvation in the theologian's sense, but with the effects of sin on the soul. In his fondness for studying the troubled conscience he showed a temperament which, despite the protests of those who knew him best, must be pronounced somewhat morbid and pessimistic. The best evidences of this are not his gloomy subjects, but little indications here and there in his writings. The comments on the death of Zenobia in *Blithedale* could have been written only by a man who felt the full weakness of human nature. The plucking from above Wordsworth's head of "weeds" that might "have drawn their nutriment from his mortal remains" would hardly have suggested itself to a buoyant mind. The questionings that came to him regarding the virtue of women that he met must have

been inspired, in a man so far from libertinism, by a profound distrust of human nature. Many such indications, in sketches, romances, and journals, indicate his lack of the hopeful spirit. In every way he was a product of New England, but not a representative.

His style and narrative method were his own. He was not a wide reader and his reading had little apparent influence on his writings. After *Fanshawe*, in which he followed the fashion of leading his chapters with mottoes, it is rare to find a quotation or a literary allusion. The influence of his contemporaries was no greater. He was on intimate terms with few men of letters at home or abroad, and his community of interest with these few was not literary. The chief quality of his prose style is a charm that cannot be analyzed. In *Fanshawe* this is hinted at, and a few passages seem like sympathetic parodies of his later work. His individual manner was, however, developed during his long seclusion at Salem. It is seen at its best in descriptions and personal comments, as in some of the sketches without plot, where it is everything. It is most unreal in conversation. His characters express appropriate thoughts, but in such language as human beings never used. Yet even here the tone of the diction so harmonizes with the idea that there is little sense of unfitness; the characters, though stiff and unnatural in words and actions, always seem essentially real. The peculiarities of his narrative method have been mentioned in connection with separate works. Perhaps the most striking of these are his assumption of almost omniscient insight into the hearts of his characters and his masterly handling of suggestiveness and symbolism. His sense of humor was but slightly and unequally developed, and there is sometimes a monotony of tone in his work; but he rarely spoils a tale by attempting humor unsuccessfully.

**Hawthorne's  
Style and  
Method**

After all has been said, the best qualities of Hawthorne's work are too subtle to be catalogued. Notwithstanding his provincialisms, his morbidness, and his occasional exhibitions of bad taste, his work as a whole leaves the impression of sustained artistic effect. In America he has taken almost unquestioned rank as our greatest romancer; and although his subjects appeal less to European readers, and his defects are such as would impress European critics, his value is recognized abroad.

**Hawthorne's  
Rank**

More distinctively than Longfellow or Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) was a product and representative of New England culture. By birth he was a typical New Englander of the better class. On his mother's side he was a lineal descendant of Anne Bradstreet, and was connected in more or less remote degrees of cousinship with some of the best known families in New England. Holmes's father, a Yale graduate, was one of the relatively few New England clergymen who clung sternly to the Calvinistic faith. He was also a man of letters, the possessor of a good library, the author of some verse, and of the *Annals of America* in prose. The mother was probably less rigid in her orthodoxy and had something of the vivacity so noticeable in her son. Oliver Wendell was born at Cambridge in 1809, the birth year, as he was fond of remarking, of Lincoln, Gladstone, Tennyson, Darwin, and other notables, among whom he might have included Poe. His early schooling was received at Cambridge, and he was sent for a year to that stronghold of orthodoxy, Phillips Academy at Andover. Among his early school fellows were several Cambridge boys and girls who were later to become famous, among them the younger Richard Henry Dana and Margaret Fuller. Holmes was, according to his own picture of himself, an active, inquisitive, ingenious boy,

**Oliver Wendell  
Holmes**

who thought much and read much, though he rarely read a book through. In 1825 he entered Harvard and was graduated with the now famous class of 1829. After the usual hesitation over the choice of a profession he took up law for a year, but abandoned it for medicine. For two years he studied in Boston, and for two years in Paris, getting glimpses in vacation of England, Scotland, Holland, the Rhine, Switzerland, and Italy. His letters from Paris show that though he enjoyed good living and a good time, he was enthusiastically devoted to his profession. On his return to America he opened an office in Boston, and built up a fair, though never a very large or remunerative, practice. He was, however, a successful and convincing writer of essays on medical topics. For two or three years he was professor of anatomy in Dartmouth college, a position that involved the delivery of a course of lectures for three months each year. In 1847 he was called to a professorship of anatomy in the Harvard medical school.

Meanwhile, Holmes had been building up a local reputation as a poet, an essayist, and a wit. While an undergraduate he had written poems, humorous and sentimental, for the Harvard "Collegian." It was while he was studying law that he became indignant at the proposal to destroy the frigate "Constitution," and made his protest in "Old Ironsides." He also contributed to various periodicals articles in prose and verse. Two of these, which appeared in the "New England Magazine" under the title of "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," were the precursors of the more famous series written later. In 1836 he published a collection of poems.

After his appointment to the Harvard professorship Holmes's life was outwardly an uneventful one. For thirty-five years he delivered regularly his four lectures a week throughout the college year. During the better days of the

#### **Holmes's Early Writings**

lyceum movement he lectured on several subjects, among them the English poets of the nineteenth century. A liability to asthma tended to keep him at home, and he travelled little, and rarely left New England, even for a short stay. He resigned from the professorship of anatomy in 1882 because he desired a rest and more time for literary work. The summer of 1886 he spent with his daughter in England and Paris. A pleasant incident of the trip was the receipt of honorary degrees from Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh. Though threatened with blindness he retained some use of his eyes and almost the full command of his other faculties until his death.

#### Holmes's Later Life

Holmes's literary reputation was achieved late in life. In 1857, when the "Atlantic Monthly" was founded, he was a middle-aged Boston gentleman, a Harvard professor, the author of a number of occasional poems and of some sentimental and humorous trifles in verse, a writer of fairly valuable and very readable medical essays, but by no means a notable man of letters. Yet it is a familiar story that Lowell insisted on his becoming a contributor to the new magazine. As usual, Lowell's instinct as an editor was true; and *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*, which ran as a serial throughout the first twelve numbers, did more than anything else to insure the success of the "Atlantic." This series was immediately followed by another, *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*. Then came *The Professor's Story*, issued in book form as *Elsie Venner*, and in 1867 another novel, *The Guardian Angel*. *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, published in 1872, completed the Breakfast-Table series. Then followed a decade of literary inactivity, in which a memoir of Motley was the only work of importance. After the resignation from the Harvard professorship came another series of interesting works—the life of Emerson in 1884, *A Mortal*

#### Holmes's Literary Career



*Antipathy* in 1884-5, *Our Hundred Days in Europe* in 1887, *Over the Tea-Cups* in 1888-90. For the edition of his works issued in 1883 he compiled a volume of *Medical Essays*, and another of miscellaneous papers collected under the title *Pages from an Old Volume of Life*. Several volumes of verse appeared at different times.

Personally as well as in ancestry Dr. Holmes was representative of much that was best in New England. He had

**Holmes's  
Personal  
Characteristics**

the Yankee characteristics of mental alertness, of ingenuity, of interest in many things. As a boy he was always working with tools and contriving new devices. As a man he experimented with the microscope before it was recognized as a necessary instrument in the study of anatomy. He was an enthusiastic amateur photographer in the days of the old and difficult wet process. He invented the ordinary hand stereoscope. Even in his latest years he was greatly interested in the mechanical ingenuity shown in such contrivances as the safety razor and the illuminating devices that aided his weakened vision. The diversity of his general interests may be seen by turning through a few pages of one of his discursive volumes. This breadth was necessarily incompatible with the greatest depth. Even in his specialty Dr. Holmes, though said always to have been abreast of the times, was not an investigator. That he chose his position, or at least occupied it knowingly, is shown in *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* and other works in which he paid his respects to the narrow specialist. His habit of reading "in books rather than through them" has been mentioned; and it was probably lack of system rather than lack of quantity in his reading that led him to say, "No graduate of Harvard—or at least very few—had ever read less at my age than myself."

It was also owing to his New England training that Holmes took great interest in theology. He early suffered a



reaction from the strict views of his father. His professional studies gave him data not known to his neighbors, and led him to approach many problems from the side of what would now be called physiological psychology. Of the popular New England writers on religious subjects he was almost the only one who gave full weight to the revelations of modern science. His favorite speculations were on sin and moral responsibility as determined by heredity and environment; but he had much to say on the belief in a future state, and the nature of the relations between God and man. These were his pet topics, to which he returned time after time in almost everything that he wrote. Much of what he said is generally unquestioned to-day, and the rest is nothing new; but at first he seemed, to the followers of his father's faith, a blasphemer.

**Holmes's  
Interest in  
Theology**

In all matters but religion Dr. Holmes was a conservative and something of an aristocrat. He disliked the extremists in reform movements, though he professed to be in sympathy with the general aims of many of them. His lack of interest in abolition was so noticeable that he was accused of being a pro-slavery man, though when the war began no one spoke more clearly than he in favor of the Union. His aristocratic tendencies show themselves in his frequent disquisitions on the subject of family and heredity, in which he called in his professional knowledge to reënforce his sympathies. There was nothing of snobbishness in all this, but rather the feeling which prefers the orderly, the well established, and the pleasant to the strenuous and the radical. On the other hand his broad sympathy is shown in many ways. It was his feelings as much as conscious determination that led him always to address the duller half of his class in his lectures. Whenever he could he refused the ungracious task of writing lit-

**Holmes's  
Conservatism**

erary criticisms. Early in his career he gained the name of being the best talker and diner out in Boston; and his geniality made it impossible to be offended at his sharp sayings. As he grew old the differences between his belief and that of the orthodox church became less marked, and this tended to remove the one hindrance to his being universally beloved.

Dr. Holmes's best prose is seen in the Breakfast-Table series. *The Autocrat*, the first and the best—to use his own

**The Autocrat of  
the Breakfast-  
Table**

phrase, the first pressing of the grapes—is made up of the best things that the author could say, and doubtless had said at the breakfast and dinner tables of Boston. The form,

that of conversation running to monologue at a table where the boarders represented a diversity of interests, gave a chance to introduce any subject, and to treat it in almost any manner. The first instalment, for example, touches on mutual admiration societies, the philosophy of conversation, puns, poetic composition, and a dozen other topics. The author's favorite theological ideas come in frequently. Poems are read by the Autocrat and others at the table. Puns, of the truly clever sort, are frequent, as in much of the author's prose and verse. Epigrams, among the best in American literature, are scattered here and there. Through the whole runs a slender thread of a love story. The characters at the table are lightly but admirably sketched, and the book has just enough unity not to be a hodgepodge, and not enough to prevent its being opened and read at any page. It has been compared to Lamb's essays, to Christopher North's *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, and to various other informal books, but while it has resemblances to some of them it has a flavor and an individuality of its own.

*The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, which followed immediately after *The Autocrat*, is on the whole the least satis-

factory of the series. The book is more serious, which means that it deals more with theological controversy. It is less in the form of conversation or broken monologue.

**The Professor  
and The Poet**

The characters, and especially the cripple, Little Boston, on whom the author lavished much care, are less attractive than those of *The Autocrat*. Though there are many excellent quotable passages the general impression left by the volume is far inferior to that of its predecessor. *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, which concludes the series, was written after a considerable interval, during which the author no doubt acquired a new fund of witty sayings. Though inferior to *The Autocrat* it is better than *The Professor*. In the character of the Master the author created as it were a second self, who could make remarks which he hesitated to give in the first person, now that the speaker was so definitely identified in the public mind as O. W. H.

Dr. Holmes again adopted a form similar to that of the Breakfast-Table series in his last important work, *Over the Tea-Cups*. This was begun in the "Atlantic" in 1888, but was interrupted by the death of his wife and his daughter, and resumed in 1890. The greater part of it was, therefore, written after the author was over eighty years of age. It is inferior to the Breakfast-Table series, but there is nothing to suggest the work of a superannuated man. It is a trifle more frank than the earlier papers in its personal references, and is written, as the author says, rather for his old friends than for new acquaintances. It contains some allusions to his favorite ideas on religious and other subjects, but its frequent discussion of new things and new problems shows how alertly the author kept pace with the times.

**Over the  
Tea-Cups**

The first two novels deal with the same problem—that of inherited tendencies—and were intended to teach something

regarding moral responsibility. "Medicated fiction" a friend of the author once called them, and he often quoted the phrase with a protest, though with evident enjoyment of its aptness. *Elsie Venner*, the heroine of the first, suffers from the effects of a rattlesnake bite received by her mother before her birth, so that her nature has a strange element not human. *The Guardian Angel* shows in a more ordinary fashion the culmination and power of strong family tendencies. The setting in both stories is in New England, and there are shrewd and happy portrayals of village life, which make use of material similar to that which Longfellow handled unsuccessfully in *Kavanagh*. The characters are sketchily yet effectively drawn, with a touch of humor, and a great deal of human sympathy. Miles Gridley, in *The Guardian Angel*, is a delightful creation, and some admirable epigrams are introduced as quotations from his forgotten book. The plot, aside from the action necessitated by the leading idea, is of the quiet, obvious, old-fashioned sort. This, indeed, is the kind of story which Holmes always used, in his novels and in the Breakfast-Table series—the simple love story, with stock hero, heroine, and villain, the action varied occasionally by a touch of the melodramatic, as in one episode of *Elsie Venner*. The lack of a more closely knit structure and the presence of so obvious a didactic motive are the chief defects in the novels. Though not great works of fiction they are wonderfully readable, and once read are likely to be remembered. Of the two, *Elsie Venner* is the more striking, but it contains no character so good as Miles Gridley.

*A Mortal Antipathy* suffers from an extreme lack of plausibility. The story is, briefly, that of a young man who has an uncontrollable aversion to all young women, the result of an injury at the hands of a pretty girl in his infancy. The resolution of the plot comes when the hero, helplessly weak

with typhoid fever, is rescued from a burning house by another pretty girl, a college athlete in bloomers. It seems strange that Holmes should have attempted a plot which his keen perception must have told him was not only improbable but somewhat ludicrous. He went conscientiously about the task of making it seem plausible, but he did not succeed. The story is most interesting for its sketches of two types of college girl, and for its reflection of the author's views on the "new woman." It is much more discursive than a novel is usually permitted to be, and may be said to stand midway between a romance and a work like those in the Breakfast-Table series.

**A Mortal  
Antipathy**

The preparation of a memoir of Motley was a difficult task, especially while unfortunate events in the political life of the historian were fresh in the public mind, and Dr. Holmes did little more than write a tribute to a friend. The life of Emerson is interesting as showing how the Sage of Concord was viewed by a friend and neighbor not in sympathy with his philosophy. Transcendentalism appealed to Holmes inasmuch as it stood for greater freedom of thought, but the oddities and extremes of the movement and its lack of repose shocked him. In his biography he succeeded in portraying one important side of Emerson's character, but another side he could hardly understand.

**Holmes's  
Biographies**

*The Medical Essays*, though included in the collected works, and readable enough, are relatively unimportant. They express views on physiological and psychological matters which are repeated in more popular form in the other essays. Several of them attack one of the Doctor's chief aversions, homeopathy. The *Pages from an Old Volume of Life* includes a variety of papers, among them "My Hunt after the Captain," an account of a journey in search of his son, who

**Holmes's  
Miscellaneous  
Prose**

had been wounded at Antietam, and "Cinders from the Ashes," a short paper containing some interesting recollections of his early life. The least important of his volumes is *Our Hundred Days in Europe*, in which he writes of his summer in England. With its testimonials to asthma cures and patent razors, its minute chronicle of goings, comings, and social attentions, this seems unworthy of "The Autocrat." If it had not been followed four years later by the bright and thoughtful *Over the Tea-Cups* it might have led to the belief that the author was lapsing into the painful garrulity of old age.

As a poet Holmes showed his conservative tendency. He was fond of the heroic couplet and continued to write it throughout life. He disliked the "rattlety-

**Holmes as a  
Poet**

bang sort of verse," as, in a goodnatured letter to Lowell, he characterized the metre of "Sir

Launfal." He wrote "metrical essays," and his lyrics were often of the mildly sentimental sort, with the quiet good taste of an old-fashioned gentleman. As an occasional poet he has been unequalled in America. His poems for the class of '29 and for many societies and anniversaries fill a considerable space in his works; and all have the merit of special fitness for the occasion, while a few possess an enduring quality. Those best known are of the lyric order, such as "Bill and Joe," and "The Boys," both among the class poems. The longer didactic pieces, with their happy mixture of humor and sense, are of a kind that has gone out of fashion; but "Poetry; a Metrical Essay" and "A Rhymed Lesson" contain many quotable couplets. Many of the early poems and a few of the later ones are wholly humorous. Holmes is at his best, however, in the blending of humor and pathos, as in "The Last Leaf," or of humor and material for solid thought, as in "The Deacon's Masterpiece"—better known as "The One-Hoss Shay." A poem of this latter sort, in which the humor predominates, was "The Broomstick Train," writ-



ten when the author was over eighty, and as fresh and ingenious as his boyhood verses. Of the purely serious poems "The Chambered Nautilus," first given in *The Autocrat*, is the best known, and was the author's favorite. Its great vogue is probably due to the obvious moral lesson in the last stanza, but for a poem of its kind it is almost flawless. The long "Wind-Clouds and Star-Drifts," published section by section in *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table*, is smooth, and phrases well the author's beliefs. Many of the short poems are of the sort sometimes called society verse—the brief treatment in perfect taste of subjects neither too serious nor too trivial. Holmes had an old-fashioned fondness for pathos, which is often shown in his prose, and in such poems as "The Voiceless" and "Under the Violets;" but he usually saved himself from sentimentality by the introduction of humor.

In discussing Dr. Holmes's rank as a man of letters it is perhaps well to begin with sweeping concessions. He was not a great scholar, a great moral teacher, a great poet, or a great essayist. He did not represent the aggressive spirit of the time. He was to a considerable extent provincial. On the other hand he was a kindly, genial, observing man, with a gift of happy expression in prose and verse. He is always suggestive, if not deep. He made a personal impression on his hearers and readers. For this reason he occupies an important and in some respects a unique place in American literature. Many a critic who would unhesitatingly concede all the limitations that have been mentioned picks up Holmes's poems and *The Autocrat* more frequently and with more pleasure than the works of any other American poet or essayist. In the great variety which these works offer there is something for every mood except that of the deepest thought, and perhaps suggestions even for that. And whatever is there is given with the in-

describable quality which we call perfect taste, and which marks the author as a gentleman.

The six greater New England writers, Emerson, Whittier, Lowell, Longfellow, Hawthorne, and Holmes, were all of

**Lesser  
Massachusetts  
Authors**

old New England ancestry and, with the exception of Longfellow, were all born in eastern Massachusetts. All but Whittier spent their active lives within twenty miles of Boston and

Harvard college, and Whittier was but little farther away. All of them were on terms of pleasant acquaintanceship, and they met frequently in Boston, especially after the founding of the "Atlantic Monthly." Besides these men and their contemporaries who have already been mentioned there were many other Massachusetts writers who were of importance in their day, and a considerable number of whom deserve to be remembered. Among those who were associated with what may be called the main literary set were James T. Fields, R. H. Dana, Jr., Edward Everett Hale, J. T. Trowbridge, Charles Eliot Norton, Samuel Longfellow, R. T. S. Lowell, William Ware, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward.

James T. Fields (1817-1881) was born in New Hampshire, but went to Boston when a young man, and for over thirty

**James T. Fields** years was a member of the leading publishing firm of that city. Unlike most of the New England literary men he did not have a college education; but he was a wide reader, and he had the instincts of a bibliophile and a collector. As publisher, and as editor of the "Atlantic Monthly" from 1862 to 1870, he became the helpful friend of many American men of letters. During frequent visits to England he made the acquaintance of leading English writers. His most valuable work is *Yesterdays with Authors*, first published in 1872. In this he writes of Thackeray, Hawthorne, Dickens, Wordsworth, Miss Mitford,

and Barry Cornwall, all of whom he had known. The papers are gossipy and appreciative rather than critical, but have real value. *Underbrush* is a collection of miscellaneous essays and sketches, some of them containing partly successful attempts at humor, and some, like a paper on "Diamonds and Pearls," the gleanings of a reader in out-of-the-way places. His poems contain some old favorites of the school readers, with humorous turns and moral lessons, but are of slight importance. As publisher, editor, lecturer, and center of a literary circle Fields rendered services to American literature altogether incommensurable with the value of his own writings.

Richard Henry Dana, Jr. (1815-1882), abolitionist, writer on international law, and occasional contributor to the "North American Review," owes his permanent literary reputation to one book, *Two Years Before the Mast*. This tells the story of the author's experiences on a cruise which he made to California for the purpose of regaining his health. It was published in 1840, and remains the best portrayal of sea life in the old days of American sailing vessels. The style is graphic, and the facts, though evidently uncolored, are so told that they have the charm of a romance.

Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909) came of a family that had been distinguished since the early days of Massachusetts Bay. After his graduation from Harvard at the age of seventeen he entered the ministry in 1842, and became pastor of a Unitarian church in Boston in 1856. For almost seventy years he was active in many ways—as preacher, lecturer, philanthropist, social reformer, editor, historian, biographer, essayist, and story writer. He was a frequent contributor to magazines, and the number and variety of his published volumes seems incredible until one remembers how long and persistently

he wrote. Though prolific, he was not a hasty or at least not a slovenly writer. His style was always easy and individual, and though he may seem a trifle garrulous in some of his later work he never loses his charm. As an historian he was accurate and reasonably thorough, but he had not the time and perhaps not the temper for deep investigation. His *Franklin in France* and other historical writings will probably be superseded; and his essays and novels can hardly last. His pleasant and gossipy recollections of New England men and affairs will long be a delight to students of these subjects, though for concise criticism and statement of fact they will go to other authorities. Perhaps his work which is most likely to live is his short stories. "My Double, and How he Undid Me," published in the "Atlantic" in 1859, showed clever and ingenious humor. "The Man without a Country," written during the Civil War, is a masterly story, and deserves to be remembered not only for its lesson of patriotism but for its literary art. The feeling is intense, yet never seems over-done; and the verisimilitude is so great that the tale has been taken for history.

John Townsend Trowbridge (1827- ), another late survivor of the early "Atlantic" group, is a native of New York, but removed to Boston about 1848. He is

**John T.  
Trowbridge**

most successful in stories for boys, and *Cudjo's Cave* and the "Jack Hazard" stories are now being enjoyed by the sons and grandsons of those who first delighted in them. His work for adults is on the whole less valuable, though the "Vagabonds" and one or two other poems are commonly known, and some of his novels were popular in their day. *My Own Story*, a late book of reminiscences, is both readable and valuable to the student of literary history.

Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908) is better known as a translator and editor than as a creative author, but filled

an important place in the New England literary set. He was born at Cambridge, graduated at Harvard, and for many years occupied a chair in that college. He **Minor Essayists and Critics** early made a journey to India, and spent much time in Europe. Besides editing the correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson and the letters of Lowell he translated Dante, and published several works on artistic and literary topics. Edwin Percy Whipple (1819-1886) was another man of literary interests, whose writings are now but little read. He held a business clerkship in Boston when in 1843 he attracted attention by an article on Macaulay, modelled somewhat on the style of that author. He soon won a reputation as an essayist and lyceum lecturer, and was one of the most respected critics of his day. Among his volumes are *Essays and Reviews*, 1848-9, *Literature and Life*, 1849, *The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, 1876. It is now difficult to understand the basis of Whipple's contemporary reputation. He was a conscientious critic, with fairly definite though narrow canons of judgment, and he tried to write in an entertaining way; but his essays show neither keen insight nor effective phrasing. Doubtless his fame was helped by the fact that he was a self-educated man, by his success as a popular lecturer, and perhaps by his style, which was modelled on that of the favorite essayist of the day, Macaulay.

Samuel Longfellow (1819-1892), younger brother of the more distinguished poet, was a graduate of Harvard and a Unitarian clergyman. He made important **Minor Poets** contributions to hymnology, both as author and editor, and he also wrote the life of his brother. Samuel F. Smith (1808-1895), a member of the famous Harvard class of 1829, and later a Baptist clergyman and an editor, wrote several hymns, and other poems, but is remembered only as the author of "My Country, 'tis of thee."



Robert Traill Spence Lowell (1816-1891), elder brother of James Russell Lowell, was a graduate of Harvard college and Harvard medical school, but later became an Episcopal clergyman. He served parishes in the Bermudas, Newfoundland, New York, and New England, and was for a time professor of Latin in Union College. He wrote poems which, while they never reach the heights, are musical and admirably sustained. More important are his stories, *The New Priest in Conception Bay*, *Anthony Brade*, and *A Story or two from a Dutch Town*. *The New Priest in Conception Bay*, his most important work, has for its setting the fishing village in Newfoundland where he was stationed. It is a strong story, with vivid character painting, but suffers from the fact that it is written with a sectarian purpose. William Ware (1797-1852), another Harvard graduate and Unitarian clergyman, published three historical or semi-historical novels—*Zenobia, or the Fall of Palmyra* (first published as *Letters from Palmyra*), *Aurelian* (first published as *Probus*), and *Julian, or Scenes in Judea*. In each of these the story is told in letters purporting to be written by one of the principal characters. The author makes a conscientious attempt to re-create ancient scenes, and his results are in some ways praiseworthy; but the length of his stories, the artificiality of his form, and the lack of a light touch interfere with his success. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward (1844-1911), who published over her maiden name, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, was a precocious Andover girl who was a contributor to "The Youth's Companion" at the age of thirteen, and to "Harper's Monthly" before she was twenty. Her many stories, sketches, and essays have most of them a moral aim. *The Gates Ajar*, her most popular work, is an imaginative presentation of the possibilities of the future life, and was inspired by the death of her brother. Louise Chandler

**Minor Writers  
of Fiction**



Moulton (1835-1908) was a native of Connecticut, but after her marriage lived in Boston. She wrote much for periodicals, and published some twenty volumes of fiction, essays, and poems.

Somewhat younger than the authors who have been mentioned was Louisa M. Alcott (1832-1888), daughter of Amos

**Later Writers—**  
**Louisa M. Alcott** Bronson Alcott. The hardships which that erratic transcendentalist brought upon his family gave her valuable training and furnished material for some of her later literary work. She early wrote verses, plays, and stories, some of which were published, but her first work of importance was *Hospital Sketches*, issued in 1863. This told of the author's experiences during a few weeks as army nurse in Washington. In 1869 it was reprinted with the addition of a group of "Camp and Fireside Stories." It is said that some of Miss Alcott's earliest tales had been of the ultra-sensational kind, and a few of those in this group show a trace of melodrama. Others abound in graphic and detailed description, and show an irrepressible sense of humor. She really found herself in the first of her long series of juvenile stories, *Little Women*, published in 1868. Many of these tales are cleverly realistic pictures of New England life as she had known it. It is usually said that she wrote for girls, as Trowbridge wrote for boys; but young people of both sexes enjoy her bright and wholesome books.

Other writers whose literary work was not fairly begun until after the close of the Civil War were John Fiske,

**John Fiske** Charles Dudley Warner, and Horace E. Scudder. John Fiske (1842-1901) holds a unique place as a scholarly expositor and popularizer of philosophy and history. He was born in Hartford, was graduated at Harvard, and lived most of his later life at Cambridge. He had a brief connection with Harvard college after his gradu-

ation, but his advancement was prevented by rumors of his atheism. Later he engaged in lecturing, and was nonresident professor of history in Washington University, St. Louis. Throughout life his interests were broad, but he was first attracted chiefly by the theory of evolution, and afterward by American history. Before 1885 he published a number of books on philosophical topics, which had great influence in interpreting the views of Darwin and Spencer to Americans. Between 1888 and his death he wrote a number of historical works. The chief characteristic of all his writings is their great clearness. He had a remarkable faculty of stating difficult matters for the common man without serious loss of scholarly accuracy.

Charles Dudley Warner (1829-1900) was born in western Massachusetts, and was graduated from Hamilton college in 1851, and from the University of Pennsylvania law school in 1856. After practicing his profession in Chicago for four years he turned to journalism, and later was one of the editors of Harper's Magazine. His first book to gain attention was *My Summer in a Garden*, a collection of light newspaper sketches published in 1870. From this time until his death he wrote voluminously. Several of his books are accounts of travel, some are fiction, and some are miscellaneous essays. *Being a Boy*, one of his most pleasing books, is full of autobiographical reminiscences. *The Gilded Age* he wrote in collaboration with Mark Twain. He was general editor of the American Men of Letters series, to which he contributed the volume on Irving. He was a journalist of the best type, a man of wide interests, of literary taste, and though genial, of sternly upright principles. His work is simple, homely, and humorous—charming reading for a summer's day, but without very distinctive qualities. Horace E. Scudder (1838-1902), a native of Boston and a graduate of Williams college, was for many

#### Later Minor Writers

years literary adviser of the leading publishing house of New England and edited some of the more important series issued by that firm. From 1890 to 1898 he was editor of the "Atlantic Monthly." His earlier writings were largely for children, and he always took an interest in child life and in juvenile literature. His most important work was the *Life of James Russell Lowell*, and he wrote other biographies and essays.

Several Massachusetts authors were, because of temperament or circumstances of residence, less closely associated

with the group that centered about Boston, J. G. Holland Harvard college, and the "Atlantic Monthly."

Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881) was a Yankee who tried keeping writing school, taking daguerreotypes, teaching, and practicing medicine, and finally found his calling in editing a newspaper and giving general good advice. At the age of thirty he became associate editor of the "Springfield Republican," and did much to develop the reputation of that paper. After 1870 he lived in New York and edited "Scribner's Monthly." His first work to attract attention was *Timothy Titcomb's Letters to Young People, Married and Single*, published in the "Springfield Republican" and collected in book form in 1858. This was followed the same year by *Bitter-Sweet*, a dramatic poem, and later by *Kathrina*, a long narrative poem, *Lessons in Life*, *Plain Talks on Familiar Subjects*, *Gold Foil Hammered from Popular Proverbs*, a *Life of Lincoln*, *Arthur Bonnicastle*, a novel, and many more. Dr. Holland's great popularity as a lyceum lecturer and the immense sales of his books indicate that he had a message for many of his contemporaries; and his works are still in print. His ideals were true, and he stated them strongly, apparently unconscious that they were commonplace. His prejudices, his religious narrowness, a sort of cheap reverberating quality of his style, and his use of up-to-date if

not slangy expressions no doubt helped to impress his moral on readers of a certain class. His poems teach the same lessons as his prose, but they move from beginning to end without a touch of inspiration. He is an example of the author who has a contemporary reputation and an influence wholly disproportioned to the artistic value of his work.

Thomas William Parsons (1819-1892) was a native of Boston. During several years of his early manhood he lived in Italy, where he became interested in Dante, and published a verse translation of the first ten cantos of the *Inferno* in 1843. He adopted the supposedly unpoetic profession of dentistry, which he practiced in Boston, and afterward in London. He completed the translation of the *Inferno* in 1867, and issued a number of small volumes of original verse, some of them privately printed. A selection from these was published as *Poems* the year after his death. The translation of Dante has been highly praised by competent scholars, and impresses the reader who does not know the original as the loving, painstaking work of a man with the poet's instinct. Parsons was a poet's poet, and he wrought little, but with great care and exquisite taste. His best known poem, "On a Bust of Dante," is one of the few flawless lyrics written by an American. Though never widely popular, he was one of the truest artists among minor American writers of verse.

Another self-exiled American who wrote poetry as an avocation was William Wetmore Story (1819-1895), the lawyer and artist. He was a native of Salem and a graduate of Harvard. After being admitted to the bar he published several legal treatises of recognized authority. In 1848 he went to Italy, where he resided for the rest of his life, and attained international fame as a sculptor. He possessed an attractive personality, his interests were wide, and his writings touch many sub-

jects. His poems were produced at various times throughout his life. After he went abroad he published a play or two and some prose works, among them *Roba di Roma, or Walks and Talks about Rome*, and *Conversations in a Studio*. His verse was obviously influenced by Browning. He made frequent use of the dramatic monologue, and succeeded well with the broken blank verse that fits this kind of composition. "A Roman Lawyer in Jerusalem," a defense of Judas, is the longest and the most ingenious of his exercises in psychological analysis. His most familiar poem, "Cleopatra," shows something of the same treatment in briefer compass and lighter measure. Some of his lyrics are well sustained and indeed all his work is usually pleasing and in good taste.

Among the minor poets whose names are occasionally recalled was George Lunt (1803-1885), a Newburyport lawyer and editor. He published several volumes of verse, but all is now forgotten except a lyric or two. Frances Sargent Osgood (1811-1850) was the daughter of a Boston merchant, but after her marriage lived in London and New York. Mrs. Osgood is perhaps now best remembered because of Poe's extravagant praise of her work, yet her contemporary fame was considerable. Her poems are most of them sentimental lyrics, often intense, and often with an element of over-fanciful imagination. The quality which attracted Poe was doubtless her smoothness and facility in versification. Epes Sargent (1813-1880), a descendant of a prominent New England family, was a painstaking editor and compiler, and the author of many original works of various kinds. Several of his plays were put on the stage and his tales for young people once had considerable vogue. John Boyle O'Reilly (1844-1890) was a native of Ireland who escaped from Australia, where he had been transported for treason. He became editor of the "Boston Pilot," and was noted as a public speaker and a poet. His verses

#### More Minor Poets

show a Celtic fluency, and are characterized by smoothness, and many aphoristic lines and couplets.

The instinct for historical writing had been strong in Massachusetts since the days of Bradford and Winthrop, and four Massachusetts men, Prescott, Bancroft, Motley, and Parkman, produced histories that are also important as literature. All were of old New England stock, born within a few miles of Boston, and graduated at Harvard college. Two of them, Prescott and Motley, devoted themselves to European history, though they chose subjects that had some connection with America; and two, Bancroft and Parkman, chose American themes.

**The Massachusetts Historians** William Hickling Prescott (1796-1859) was a native of Salem, and in 1811 entered college as a sophomore. The next year he was struck by a piece of bread thrown by a fellow student at commons, and received injuries that resulted in the blindness of one eye and great weakness of the other. He had been a fair student, and the faculty showed him some consideration, so that he was able to receive his degree. He spent some time in travel and contributed a few papers to the "North American Review" and other magazines. His financial circumstances were such that he might have lived without definite employment, but he rejected this possibility and resolved to become a writer. To make up for the deficiencies of his college training he outlined a course of study, most of which he carried out. After much consideration he decided on a subject from Spanish history, and in 1837 published his *Ferdinand and Isabella*. He then turned naturally to *The Conquest of Mexico*, the theme of which Irving generously relinquished to him, and afterward to *The Conquest of Peru*. Before his death he had completed three of four projected volumes on *Philip the Second*.



Prescott's methods of study and composition were determined by his infirmity. He could not himself ransack libraries and manuscript collections, or even visit with profit the places where these authorities were found. He never went to Spain, Mexico, or Peru. Fortunately he had both influence and money, and was able to engage the best copyists and to secure for them admission to the most valuable collections. The results of their labors were brought to his darkened study and used with the aid of readers. After he had planned a work he got in mind the facts relating to a single topic, and thought out the details and even the phraseology before a line was written. In *Ferdinand and Isabella* every sentence is elaborated as if it were intended as a textbook example of its type. Later he gained greater ease, but he always gave the impression of studious care. His methods of work also affected the value of his history as history, though he recognized the difficulties under which he labored and tried to overcome them. It is a common charge that he painted his historical pictures with too gorgeous coloring.

John Lothrop Motley (1814-1877) was born at Dorchester, a half generation younger than Prescott. After a brilliant though not very diligent career at Harvard, he studied at Berlin and Goettingen. His first two volumes were novels. The earlier, *Morton's Hope*, is partly autobiographical, and in some places has a little of the flavor of *Wilhelm Meister*. *Merry Mount* is historical fiction. At an early date he had written a review article or two on historical subjects, and he began systematic study of the history of the Dutch Republic. On learning that Prescott intended a work on Philip the Second he was tempted to give up, but Prescott encouraged him, as he had himself been encouraged by Irving under similar circumstances. From 1851 to 1856 he worked among the

Prescott's  
Literary Method

John Lothrop  
Motley

manuscript collections of Europe and finished *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* in 1856. In 1860 he published two volumes of *The United Netherlands* and completed the work in 1868. Meanwhile he had been for a time minister to Austria and in 1869 was made minister to England. In both positions he had serious trouble, which led to bitter and confusing newspaper controversy. After his summary recall from England he wrote a life of John of Barneveldt, and planned a work on the Thirty Years' War which his failing health did not allow him to prepare. Motley was a careful and thorough student, and any defects of his work come rather from his personality than from his methods. He seems to have had the temper of an advocate rather than that of a judge, and perhaps that of a dramatist more than either. When he considered historical questions analogous to those in the United States he was somewhat of a partizan, and he was likely to sympathize with the most picturesque character. His history always has a hero.

George Bancroft (1800-1891), the elder of the two historians who chose American themes, was born in Worcester.

> **George Bancroft** He was one of the first of the Harvard men to study in Germany and received the degree of Ph.D. from Goettingen in 1820. In 1822-3 he was tutor in Greek at Harvard, and in the latter year published a volume of poems. He had, however, already determined to devote himself to history, and in 1834 he published the first volume of his *History of the United States*. This history was his chief literary task throughout life, though his work upon it was much interrupted by his participation in politics. He was successively collector of the port of Boston, secretary of the navy, and minister to England and to Germany. After 1849 he lived in New York. Twelve volumes of his history appeared at intervals until 1882, the last bringing the narrative to the adoption of the constitution. The final revised

edition was published in 1884-5. His other writings are mostly magazine articles and occasional addresses.

Bancroft differed from most of his New England contemporaries in being a democrat, and his political beliefs influenced both his views of history and his style. He was much of a moralist, as is shown by some of his earliest essays. He interpreted history in the light of his views on life and government, and thus to a certain extent laid himself open to the charge of partizanship. His style, especially in the earlier volumes, had something of the heightened quality that was affected by the democrats rather than the federalists. He was, however, a thorough and conscientious investigator, trained even more than most of his contemporaries in the methods of German scholarship. If his history is not absolutely impartial it is not because of any deliberate misrepresentation or coloring.

Francis Parkman (1823-1893) was born in Boston, and after his graduation from Harvard studied law, but never practiced. In 1846 he went on an extended trip through the wilderness west of the Mississippi, and improved every opportunity to become familiar with the life of the hunter, the guide, and the Indian. His account of this trip, first published in the "Knickerbocker Magazine," and afterward issued as *The California and Oregon Trail*, is an unusually interesting narrative of personal adventure. Two years later he published his first historical work, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*. His health was never good, and was permanently impaired by exposure and over exertion during his first visit to the West. Much of the time he was wholly unable to use his eyes, and another affliction deprived him for a time of the use of his limbs. While in a depressed state of mind after the completion of *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* he wrote a novel, *Vassal*

**Bancroft's  
Literary Method**

**Francis  
Parkman**

*Morton*, published in 1856, but omitted from his collected works. This is slightly melodramatic in plot, and is evidently in a degree autobiographical. At a later time he turned to horticulture as an out-door avocation. He published a book on roses in 1866, and in 1871-2 was professor of horticulture at Harvard. In spite of all difficulties he persevered in his historical work, and produced a series of volumes covering the entire conflict between France and England for supremacy in the New World. Those that followed *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* were *Pioneers of France in the New World*, 1865; *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, 1867; *La Salle: or The Discovery of the Great West*, 1869; *The Old Régime in Canada*, 1874; *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV*, 1877; *Montcalm and Wolfe*, 1884; and *A Half-Century of Conflict*, 1892. In the preparation of these works Parkman made five trips to France to examine authorities, and visited nearly every part of America in which the scenes of his histories are laid. He combined in a remarkable degree the accurate method and impartial sense of a modern historian with a keen observation of nature and man, and an eye for the picturesque. His works are of unquestioned value as authorities, and his style has a finish and charm hardly to be found in the work of any other American historian of equal scholarly rank. He wrote narrative rather than philosophical history, yet his analyses of causes and of great movements are sufficient and sound.

Several of the Massachusetts publicists and orators have been discussed in other connections, and a few more deserve mention. Rufus Choate (1799-1859), a lawyer and for one term United States senator from Massachusetts, was a man of brilliant and magnetic personality. He was a devoted student of the classics, and he deliberately applied the results of his studies to the development of his own style, not always with fortu-

#### Publicists and Orators

nate effects. In some orations he uses long and involved sentences in which the reader becomes entangled, though his delivery is said to have concealed the defect. He belongs on the whole to the same group of orators as Webster; but he had more brilliancy and less weight and dignity, and his power probably depended more on his personal manner. Though his speeches are still traditionally classic they are little read, and have little influence on modern public speaking. Charles Francis Adams (1807-1886), son of John Quincy Adams, had a long public career, the most important incident of which was the ministry to England under President Lincoln. In his younger days he contributed articles on literary and miscellaneous subjects to the "North American Review;" he edited with great care the works of his father and his grandfather, and wrote their memoirs; he published some political pamphlets; and he delivered many orations and addresses. The frank determination and the literary tastes and interests which had characterized the earlier members of the family are seen to a considerable extent in all these works. Charles Sumner (1811-1874) was the son of an old New England family, a graduate of Harvard, a student of literature, and in his day the "scholar in politics" from Massachusetts. A Fourth of July oration, "On the True Grandeur of Nations," in which he opposed war, attracted much attention. After 1850 almost all his speeches were on political questions; but he continued to keep his interest in literature, and was a life-long intimate of Longfellow and others of the Cambridge literary set. The discussion of his long service in the senate, with the sensational assault by Brooks, and the later alienation from his party, belongs to political history. The fifteen volumes of his works offer little attraction to the ordinary reader. They are made up largely of speeches in the senate. His formal addresses before that body were usually four hours in length and were in a style that has been called

"architectural." This epithet is apt in the sense that they were built up with great labor, not that they were admirable in proportion. His style was formal, and his use of many quotations and allusions was in a manner already almost obsolete.

The literary work in the other New England states was far inferior to that in Massachusetts. Connecticut still held

Connecticut—  
Donald Grant  
Mitchell

the second place with a few minor poets and several prose writers of more importance. Of the latter perhaps Donald Grant Mitchell (1822-1908) shows most markedly the char-

acteristics that have been seen in earlier Connecticut writers, though he also has some resemblance in both temper and literary manner to Irving. He was born in Norwich and was graduated from Yale in 1841. His first writings were sketches of European travel and light satirical essays. In 1850 he published, over the pen-name "Ik Marvel," *Reveries of a Bachelor*, and the next year *Dream Life*. These books can be described neither as romances nor as personal essays, but have some of the characteristics of both. They partly tell and partly imply a story, but the narrative element is not predominant. *Reveries of a Bachelor*, especially, is a charming embodiment of the old-fashioned genial and delicate sentimentalism at its best. After serving for a time as United States consul at Venice, Mitchell settled in 1855 at Edgewood, a farm near New Haven, where he lived until his death. He writes of this in *My Farm of Edgewood*, *Wet Days at Edgewood*, and other volumes that combine appreciation of nature, practical observations on farming, and gleanings from the georgic writings of English and classic poets. His *English Lands, Letters, and Kings*, and *American Lands and Letters* are literary criticism with a strong personal element.

Mitchell is said to have been annoyed that the public preferred *Reveries of a Bachelor* to his later writings; and



many of his warmest admirers give first rank to such volumes as *Wet Days at Edgewood*. It is probable, however, that the public is right, and that though the earlier volumes belong to a kind of literature now out of fashion they have more real vitality than the author's slightly self-conscious writings as gentleman farmer or as amateur critic. All Mitchell's work, however, is delicate in manner and pervaded by an air of leisurely culture that is too rare in American books.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), though at different times resident in many places, fairly belongs to Connecticut.

She was born in Litchfield, the daughter of the Reverend Lyman Beecher, one of the strongest of the New England clergymen who clung to Trinitarian Congregationalism, and the sister of a still more distinguished clergyman, Henry Ward Beecher. Her mother died four years after her birth, and her father, though he married twice afterward, took chief charge of her education. Numerous anecdotes are told of the homely, simple, humorous life of the family. The children were allowed a wider course of reading than some Calvinists would have approved, and Mrs. Stowe remembered especially her experiences with the *Arabian Nights*, Scott, and Byron.

Dr. Beecher was called to a conservative pulpit in Boston, and in 1832 to the presidency of a theological seminary in Cincinnati. Here Harriet became intimate with Mrs. Calvin E. Stowe, wife of a professor in the seminary; and after her friend's death in 1834 her efforts to console the husband led to an engagement and her marriage in 1836. Professor Stowe afterward accepted calls in the East, first at Bowdoin college, Brunswick, Maine, and then at Andover theological seminary; and in 1864 the family settled permanently at Hartford. After the war they also had a winter home in Florida.

Before her marriage Mrs. Stowe had published a geography

and done some other slight work with her pen; and although her health was poor, and limited means imposed on her a large share of household duties, she continued to write occasionally. It was just after her removal to Brunswick, that she began the composition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. During her residence in Cincinnati she had seen much of slavery across the border, and she had visited friends in the slave states. She always believed slavery an evil, but she was not at first an abolitionist, and even after her convictions became more intense she was never guilty of the vindictive sentiments shown by many northerners who knew nothing of the South at first hand. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she tried to show the bright as well as the dark side of slavery; and she pictured the most brutal slave-master and the woman with the most unreasonable race prejudice as northerners. Indeed, she was surprised that opposition to the book came from the South rather than from the radical abolitionists, whom she thought she was too mild to please.

The inspiration to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came from a desire to arouse interest in the evils of slavery, supplemented by a purpose to increase the meagre family income. The work grew to completion slowly, during the few spare moments of a busy housewife. It first appeared serially during 1851-2 in the "National Era," an abolitionist paper of small circulation published in Washington. As soon as it was completed it was issued in book form at Boston, and achieved remarkable success. Statistics are somewhat conflicting, but it is usually said that half a million copies were sold in five years. In England the book had an almost equally remarkable run, and it was translated into most continental languages.

As a reply to critics who doubted the truth of her portrayals the author published in 1853 *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The same year she went abroad, and the inevitable volume of experiences appeared in 1854 as *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*. In 1856 she issued a second novel of Mrs. Stowe's slavery, *Dred, a Tale of the Great Dismal* Later Writings *Swamp*, based on some events in the Nat Turner slave insurrection of 1831. In later editions of her works this story appeared with the title *Nina Gordon*. At the time of its publication Mrs. Stowe went to England to protect her copyrights, and made a tour of the continent. After her return to America she continued to write profusely until she was seventy years of age. After that time her powers declined and she published nothing of importance. The Riverside edition of her works comprises sixteen volumes. Among her later writings that deserve mention are two stories with New England background, *The Minister's Wooing* and *Old-Town Folks*. The former has a theological motive, less interesting now than when the book was written. The charm of both is due to the shrewd, sympathetic, and human portrayal of New England life—a life that the author knew far better than that which she depicts in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Some of her volumes are for young people and others are sketches with a moral and didactic purpose. In 1869 she contributed to the "Atlantic Monthly" a vindication of Lady Byron, which she followed by a book on the same subject. It is based on revelations which she received, or believed herself to have received, from Lady Byron herself. Her sincerity cannot be doubted, but her story was so revolting that the world was not prepared to believe it without better authentication than she could offer, and the episode must be considered the most unfortunate in her literary career.

Though many critics find the nearest approach to artistic excellence in the New England tales, Mrs. Stowe seems destined to be known as the author of one book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The faults of this story are obvious. It is sensational,

and the plot structure is especially open to criticism. It is, however, a sympathetic presentation of life by an alert, kindly, and intensely human woman. After all, analysis of such a book is likely to be less satisfactory than a statement of its success.

**Mrs. Stowe's  
Fame**

At first its great sale in America was ascribed to its timeliness; but it had almost equal vogue in countries where the domestic institutions of America caused little concern, and after more than half a century it still maintains its popularity, and dramatized versions are still played not only in America but in England and on the Continent. Whatever the formal critic may say, such wide and long continued popularity shows the presence of some elements of literary greatness, if not of artistic skill.

The author who has suddenly become a celebrity writes ever after at a disadvantage. After 1852 Mrs. Stowe worked with the public eye continually upon her. Personally she continued unspoiled by praise; but the quality of her work may have been injured by a knowledge of what was expected of her. At all events it is the critics rather than the common readers who have pointed out the excellences in her work of later date, while her first story has appealed to millions.

Two lesser Connecticut authors were connected with events of the Civil War. H. H. Brownell (1820-1872), a Hartford lawyer, attracted the attention of Admiral Farragut by some of his poems on naval subjects, and received an appointment as acting ensign that enabled him to see actual service.

**Minor  
Connecticut  
Writers**

"The Bay Fight" describes the battle of Mobile, at which he was present, and "The River Fight" the engagement at New Orleans. Both seem imitative of greater poems on similar themes, such as Tennyson's "The Revenge," and Cowper's "On the Loss of the Royal George;" but both are tediously long and not well sustained. As the events of which they

treat pass farther back into history the praise that they once received seems strangely overdone. Brownell's miscellaneous poems are equally unsuccessful. Theodore Winthrop (1828-1861) was descended from the early governor of Massachusetts Bay, and on his mother's side from Jonathan Edwards. In the six years after his graduation from Yale in 1848 he visited various parts of Europe, Panama, California, and Oregon, and returned overland to the East. At the outbreak of the war he enlisted, rose to the rank of major, and was killed in battle in 1861. Before his death he had published little except some short papers in the "Atlantic Monthly." His three novels, *Cecil Dreeme*, *John Brent*, and *Edwin Brothertoft*, two volumes of short sketches, and a collection of poems appeared posthumously and gained considerable vogue. The experiences of the author's short life gave him an abundance of material, and his stories and sketches of travel show great variety. It is probable, however, that public interest was stimulated somewhat by a knowledge of his personality, and the picturesque facts of his career; and few persons now read his works. Rose Terry Cooke (1827-1892) published light and melodious verses, and short magazine stories. A touch of sentiment suggests the work of the earlier Connecticut school, though she is saved from offensive sentimentality by a good sense of humor and by the change in the spirit of the times.

In Rhode Island Albert G. Greene (1802-1868), a Providence lawyer of literary tastes, wrote a number of poems, including two favorites of the old school readers, "Old Grimes" and "The Baron's Last Banquet." He also deserves to be remembered as the founder of the Harris Collection of American Poetry. Sarah Helen Whitman (1803-1878) was also a resident of Providence. Her maiden name was Power. In 1828 she was married to Mr. Whitman; in 1833 she was widowed. In

**Minor Rhode  
Island Writers**

1848 she was provisionally engaged to Poe, but the arrangement was broken off, partly through the agency of friends. Mrs. Whitman is best remembered on account of her relations to Poe, and her essay "Edgar A. Poe and his Critics;" but her poems are better than the average minor verse of the time. They have a tendency to be sentimental, and are not highly original, but they are remarkably melodious, and show considerable familiarity with modern European literature. Some of those which grew out of her relations with Poe are among her best and have an added biographic value.

In Vermont Daniel P. Thompson (1795-1868), a farmer's boy who was educated at Middlebury college and became a prominent lawyer, judge, politician, and editor, wrote a number of historical and other novels. Only one of these survives—*The*

**Minor Vermont  
Writers**

*Green Mountain Boys*, an historical romance dealing with Vermont in the Revolution. The patriotic nature of the subject no doubt had much to do with the popularity of this tale; but the story is stirring and well told, and the book is still a good one for boys, and not beneath the notice of their elders. John G. Saxe (1816-1887) was also a native of Vermont, a graduate of Middlebury, a lawyer, an editor, and a politician. During his later years he resided in New York City and Albany. He is said to have been a brilliant but erratic man, with periods of nervous excitement which in later years became downright insanity. He began his literary career as a newspaper humorist; and his best work is as the author of humorous poems, many of which satirize social foibles. "The Proud Miss McBride," one of the most popular of these, is aimed at the airs of the newly rich. It is clever, but like many of his poems is too long. Some of his other verses abound in puns, and have a slight burlesque element, suggesting Hood. His few serious poems are not of great value. Though not one of the greater American humorists,



Saxe is well above the level of the ordinary newspaper rhymster, and his fun is genuine and clean.

Celia Leighton Thaxter (1836-1894) was a native of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and passed most of her life on the Isle of Shoals, where her father was lighthouse keeper. Her prose sketches, *Among the Isles of Shoals*, first published in the "Atlantic," and many of her poems show the influence of her life-long environment. Her prose is over-crowded with adjectives, but vivid, and full of suggestive description and anecdote. Her poems, many of them on subjects connected with the sea, have no great distinction, but rank well among the minor verse of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

**Minor New  
Hampshire  
Writer**

In Maine Jacob Abbott (1803-1879), a Congregational clergyman, and for a time professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in Amherst college, emulated "Peter Parley" as a writer of moral and instructive books for the young. His biographer credits him with more than two hundred works. The most important are the twenty-eight volumes of the Rollo series, which tell of the life, adventures, and travels of Rollo Holiday and his family. Characters and events are both natural, but the story in each volume is slight, and the real aim is to give information. Jacob Abbott's brother, John S. C. Abbott (1805-1877), also a clergyman, wrote a number of popular histories, some of them still read. He was a compiler rather than an original student. Mrs. Elizabeth Akers Allen (1832-

) was born and passed the first thirty years of her life in Maine; later she lived in Washington, in Baltimore, and in New York. Her poems, some of them published over the signature of Florence Percy, are mostly lyrics. The only one now generally remembered is the sentimental "Rock me to Sleep, Mother," which by no means represents her best work.

A Maine writer of greater distinction was Sylvester Judd

**Minor Maine  
Writers**

(1813-1853), long pastor of a Unitarian church at Augusta. He was born in Massachusetts and was graduated from Yale college and from Harvard divinity school.

**Sylvester Judd** His most important work bears the rather appalling title of *Margaret, a Tale of the Real and Ideal, Blight and Bloom; Including Sketches of a Place not before Described, called Mons Christi*. It was first published in 1845 and revised in 1851. The scene is laid in New England in the years just following the Revolution. The heroine, Margaret, is a waif who grows up among the lowest classes of New England society, in the midst of vice and without religious instruction, but remains pure, and has religious dreams and visions. After many experiences she marries a wonderful Mr. Evelyn, who converts her to Unitarianism, and together they purchase the country about her former home and establish an ideal state of society. The first part of the book was written after careful antiquarian research, and impresses the reader as true to life, even without the tributes to its fidelity from older New England critics. The later part shows the strangely confused ideals of a transcendental Unitarian. The book was devoutly written to interpret the author's views more freely than he could express them in sermons. As a unified work of art it is nothing; but some scenes are strong, the interpretation of New England life and nature is excellent, and the "ideal" parts are an interesting if sometimes an amusing revelation of certain aspects of New England thought. Judd also published *Philo, an Evangeliad*, in verse, and a second tale, *Richard Edney*, which deals with contemporary New England life. His biographer gives copious extracts from a blank verse tragedy which was never published. These works have the defects of *Margaret*, with less of its power.

New England produced several writers who became famous for a coarse grained and more hilarious humor than that of

Lowell and Holmes. Chief among these was Charles Farrar Browne (1834-1867), who wrote over the name of Artemus

**New England  
Humorists**

Ward. He was born in Maine, and after receiving an elementary education worked first as printer and then as reporter on various papers in New England, New York and Ohio. He first attracted attention by humorous articles in a Cleveland newspaper about 1858. In 1861 he began to lecture, and was successful both in the East and in California, where he made an extended trip in 1862-4. In 1866 he went to England on a lecturing tour which opened auspiciously, but was soon ended by his death from consumption at the age of thirty-two. As a lecturer Artemus Ward is said to have possessed an imperturbable gravity of manner which added much to the effect of his drolleries. The humor in his writings comes from his extreme whimsicality and unexpected turns of thought and phrase. Many of his newspaper essays read better than the lectures. A few are slightly coarse, but the majority are wholly clean and wholesome. Among less important humorists was Seba Smith (1792-1868), also a native of Maine and a journalist. As Major Jack Downing he wrote humorous letters, largely on political topics. Benjamin P. Shillaber (1814-1890), a Boston editor, won fame as the creator of Mrs. Partington, a sort of Yankee Mrs. Malaprop. Besides the Mrs. Partington sayings, which depend for their humor on the misuse of words, he wrote many other sketches, several of them for juvenile readers.

## V. NEW YORK WRITERS

While Boston was in one sense the literary capital of the country from 1833 to 1883, New York was the center of those commercial industries most closely allied with literature. New England developed one magazine of great literary significance, and one publishing house that controlled the copy-

rights of many of the best works of American authors; but New York was the center of the book trade and of general

**Conditions in  
New York**

publishing interests, it had the best daily papers, and it came to lead in the publication of magazines. The "Knickerbocker Magazine" and "Putnam's Monthly Magazine" were both solid and respectable periodicals, though they never equalled the "Atlantic;" and with the increased use of high grade illustrations in magazines "Harper's Monthly Magazine," "Scribner's Monthly," (afterward the "Century Magazine"), and later the new "Scribner's Magazine" and others came to occupy a high place. The presence of these publishing interests could not fail to make New York the home of many writers, and the literary headquarters, so to speak, of many others. A large number of men were attracted from different sections of the country to editorial positions on New York newspapers

**The New York  
Editors**

and magazines. The list includes writers like Dana and Ripley, who have been discussed among New England writers, and Poe, who more properly belongs to the South; and others, like Stedman, Gilder, Aldrich, and Howells, who will be remembered chiefly as poets or novelists. A considerable number of men, however, who should be credited to New York deserve a place in literary history on account of work that was closely associated with editorial labors.

Nathaniel Parker Willis (1806-1867) was one of the most prominent of early New York editors and was a great figure in the literary life of his time. He was born

7 **N. P. Willis**

in Portland, Maine, of the strictest New England ancestry, and was educated at Andover and Yale. Even before he left college he had gained a wide reputation by his poems, especially some of his paraphrases of Scripture narratives. After his graduation he wrote poems, edited annuals for Goodrich, and founded in Boston the "American Monthly

Magazine." This failed, and in 1831 Willis, who was finding the strict tradition to which he was born irksome, removed to New York and became associated with George P. Morris in the editorship of the "New York Mirror." With this paper and its successors, the "New Mirror" and the "Home Journal," he maintained an uninterrupted connection until his death. From 1831 to 1836 he was abroad. He travelled widely in Europe, made his way into the best society, and turned what he saw to account in gossipy letters for publication. He married an English lady and brought her home to a country place near Owego which he named Glenmary. Nine years later his wife died, and some time afterward he married again and settled in a less pretentious residence, Idlewild, on the Hudson. Both Glenmary and Idlewild figure in his writings.

Willis avowed a frank preference for editorial work and journalistic correspondence that would please his contemporaries, rather than for the preparation of elaborate productions in the hope of posthumous fame. With the exception of one novel, *Paul Fane*, almost all his prose was in the form of short letters, sketches, and tales, and was first published in some periodical. Several of his volumes, like *Pencillings by the Way*, and *Loiterings of Travel*, are made up of travellers' letters. Others, like *Letters from Under a Bridge*, *Out Doors at Idlewild*, and *The Convalescent*, are gossipy correspondence from his country homes. *Life Here and There*, *Hurrygraphs*, *Fun Jottings*, *The Rag-Bag*, and others are more miscellaneous, and are made up of magazine ephemera. Two dramas, "Bianca Visconti" and "Tortessa; or The Usurer Matched," and "Lady Jane," a poem influenced by *Don Juan*, are, with the novel already mentioned, his most ambitious productions. The bulk of his poetical work was done in early life.

As editor and elder man of letters Willis was the helpful

friend of many young American writers; but the great popularity of his works, and a certain jaunty air which he affected, made him enemies. In some respects he was open to criticism. He was a man of the world who without family or money made his way into some of the best society of Europe; and he was accused of turning into newspaper copy family and society secrets which a more delicately minded man would have refrained from mentioning. It should be said, however, that this charge was brought by rival Americans, rather than by the European friends who were supposed to have suffered. He fought a duel with an English author, and he was named as co-respondent in the most famous divorce case that agitated New York society about the middle of the nineteenth century. In this, as in many of the matters charged against him, his guilt was not proved. He should probably be remembered as a kindly but rather weak man, whose shortcomings were due to a deficient sense of the highest fitness of things, rather than to any deliberate violation of the ethical and social code.

As a poet Willis enjoyed great vogue and still finds a few readers. His paraphrases of Scripture seem flat and artificial,

now that the simplicity and directness of the Bible prose are so generally appreciated. In a time when the sacredness of the book precluded the thought of reading it as literature there was need of anything that would visualize Bible scenes and make Bible characters seem real men and women. To many devout readers "Hagar in the Wilderness" and "Jephthah's Daughter" were the highest type of poetry. Many of the miscellaneous verses show the sentimentality of the author's time; some, like "Parrhasius," though powerful, are artificial. His satire, "Lady Jane," has deservedly shared the fate of other imitations of *Don Juan*. Perhaps the best of the poems are sentimental or

#### Willis's Character

#### Willis's Poems



humorous trifles which would at a little later time have been called society verse.

As a prose writer Willis had a taking journalistic style. He knew what would interest the public; and he was a master of the art of making his writing personal without seeming to be egotistical. He kept himself prominent in his letters from abroad; many of his sketches and tales are autobiographic. His letters from Glenmary and Idlewild often dealt with the most trivial and commonplace matters, and drew their interest from the fact that the author, a distinguished man of letters, seemed to be chatting with the individual reader concerning his garden, his poultry, or his personal ailments. The chief defects of form are those that come from haste and a lack of feeling for the chastity of language. The titles of his books indicate a tendency to be striking; and the same tendency is shown in the coinage of barbarous words and the forming of strange compounds.

Both as a man and as an author Willis was genial, and truly devoted to America and American literature; but both his personal and his literary ideals were lacking in virility and firmness. He did much for American authors and American letters, and later critics have been somewhat slow to appreciate his services. The oblivion which is overtaking his works is deserved, but not the slighting obloquy which is sometimes cast upon the author.

Almost the opposite of Willis in most particulars was Horace Greeley (1811-1872), the founder of the "New York Tribune." He was born in Amherst, New Hampshire, where his parents were Scotch-Irish farmers of the lowest class. After receiving slight education and serving an apprenticeship in country newspaper offices he became a tramp printer and made his way to New York. Here, after a variety of experiences as printer, publisher,

and editor of campaign papers, he founded the "Tribune," which he controlled editorially until shortly before his death. In 1872 he seceded from the Republican party and became a candidate for president on the Liberal Republican and Democratic tickets. The strain of the campaign, followed by the disappointment of an overwhelming defeat, broke down his health, and he died a few days after the election.

As a writer, Greeley was master of a rough and ready outspoken style that impressed his readers with his honesty and fearlessness. In both writings and actions he had a way of occasionally doing the unexpected thing. He was to some degree in sympathy with the New England transcendental movement, and he employed on the "Tribune" Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, George William Curtis, C. A. Dana, and other transcendentalists. He defended in the "Tribune" some of the doctrines of Fourier, and he gave much space to reports and discussions of table-tipping and other spiritualistic phenomena, though he did not profess belief. It was through the "Tribune" that the spirit of "the newness" which inspired New England found its way to many readers in other parts of the country. The paper also led public thought on political and economic questions. Greeley wrote a history of the civil war, which was naturally somewhat partizan; *What I know of Farming*, an amusing book telling of his unsuccessful agricultural experiences; and an interesting autobiography, *Recollections of a Busy Life*. He is remembered, however, not because of these works, but because of his influence through the "Tribune"—an influence not easily realized now, when the race of great personal editors is extinct, and not one reader in ten can name the man who controls the policy of his favorite newspaper.

With New York editors may also be included the Reverend Rufus Wilmot Griswold (1815-1857). He was a native of Vermont, and in early life had a varied career as printer,

editor, and Baptist clergyman. From 1841 to 1843 he edited "Graham's Magazine" in Philadelphia, and then removed to

**Rufus Wilmot  
Griswold**

New York, where he was connected with various minor periodicals. His own inconsiderable writings in prose and verse are now forgotten, but he is remembered as the compiler and editor of several collections of American literature. His *Poets and Poetry of America*, *Prose Writers of America*, and *Female Poets of America* each went through several editions. In these works he bestowed praise on American authors with a lavishness that now seems ridiculous; nevertheless he antagonized many persons who did not receive what they felt to be their due share of compliments. A much better man would have made the same enemies; and much was charged against him that was untrue. Still, after all possible allowances are made, he seems to have been conceited, and not always impartial, and, what is worse, to have lacked a high sense of honor. His edition of Poe will be considered in another place. His collections and criticisms did considerable service in calling attention to the body of readable American writings; but it is a distinct misfortune that this labor could not have been performed by an abler and a juster man.

Of less importance than the men already mentioned was Park Benjamin (1809-1864), son of a Connecticut man who

**Minor New York  
Editors**

had removed to British Guiana. He was connected editorially with a number of papers and magazines, among them the "American Monthly Magazine," and "Brother Jonathan," and he wrote many verses and miscellaneous essays. Lewis Gaylord Clark (1810-1873), for many years editor of the "Knickerbocker Magazine," was a native of western New York. He was known in his day as a writer of clever and genial quips and sketches, which usually appeared in the editorial departments of his magazine and a few of which were collected in book

form. T. S. Fay (1807-1898), a native of New York city, was for a time associated with Morris and Willis on the "New York Mirror," and published a novel, *Norman Leslie*, and several volumes of miscellaneous essays.

George William Curtis (1824-1892) represented the New York of a slightly later date than the men who have already been mentioned. He was born in Providence, Rhode Island, but his family removed to New York in 1839. He served for a year as clerk in a mercantile house, and gained the familiarity with New York business life that he showed later in *Prue and I*, *Trumps*, and other writings. In 1842 he and his brother became pupils in the school at Brook Farm, and later he spent some time with the families of two farmers near Concord. In these days he was a young man of fascinating personality, devoted to music, and so strongly affected by transcendentalism that he adopted various fads in dress and diet. At Concord he was a member of the little transcendental circle that gathered about Emerson, though he was not blind to the humorous aspects of the movement. From 1846 to 1850 he was abroad, journeying in a leisurely manner through Europe and spending some time in Egypt and Syria. The chief literary results of this trip were *Nile Notes of a Howadji*, and *The Howadji in Syria*, published in 1851 and 1852 respectively. These differ from ordinary books of travel in that they attempt to give the spirit of the scene rather than minute descriptive details; and they surprised some of the author's friends by showing a frank yielding to the sensuous charm of the East. Though the descriptions are too full of adjectives and too intense, the volumes still have power to delight the sympathetic reader and almost to carry him into a land of enchantment.

On his return to America Curtis began his long career as an editor. He was at first connected with the "New

York Tribune," but soon became editor of "Putnam's" and began to conduct the Easy Chair department in "Harper's Monthly." In 1857 he also became chief editorial writer for "Harper's Weekly." He achieved much fame as an orator and went on the lyceum platform. Though he persistently declined public office he was always active in politics, and in his later years was perhaps the most prominent leader in the movement for civil service reform.

After the publication of his first two volumes Curtis's chief literary work was done for the periodicals which he edited and for the lecture platform. *Lotus-Eating* is a series of letters from American watering places, full of comparisons with the European scenes that were still fresh in his mind, and of satire on American social crudeness. *The Potiphar Papers*, *Prue and I*, and his one novel, *Trumps*, are the work of a man who has read Thackeray and who takes something of the same view of the world, but is much more downright in thought and expression. All satirize the selfishness and sordidness of New York life. *Prue and I*, the most delicate of the three, still has its admirers, but in all the satire is too serious to be really pleasing. By far the most charming volumes that bear the author's name are those which contain essays selected from the "Easy Chair." Next in interest are a collection of *Orations and Addresses* and another of *Literary and Social Essays*, issued after his death.

George William Curtis's great power was due to his genality, to the absolute purity and disinterestedness of his nature, and to his genuine devotion to democratic ideals. He offered the too rare spectacle of an American in politics without desire of personal reward. In the midst of New York life he always kept some of the characteristics of transcendental New England—a touch of sentiment, high idealism, and an intense devotion

#### Curtis's Writings

#### Curtis's Characteristics

to duty. His essays in the "Easy Chair" often announced views on moral questions with which many of his readers must have disagreed, but no one who had felt the charm of the author could take offense. On the whole, he was at his best in descriptive and reminiscient sketches where his kindliness and human sympathy predominate, and in his simple comments on life where his reiteration of old but needed truths never seems trite.

Another influential journalist of the latter half of the period was Edwin Lawrence Godkin (1831-1902), a native of Ireland, who came to America in 1856.

**More Minor  
Editors**

After engaging in miscellaneous journalistic work and studying law he founded in 1865 the New York "Nation," with which he was connected until his death. He was master of a vigorous style of editorial writing which was effective, but likely to be irritating to those who disagreed with him. Though he published some works in book form, the achievement for which he deserves to be remembered is the establishment of the "Nation" in the high position which it has long held among American weeklies. Parke Godwin (1816-1904), a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Princeton, was long associated with his father-in-law, William Cullen Bryant, on the "Evening Post." He also edited other periodicals, among them the "Harbinger," the organ of Fourierism in New York, and "Putnam's Monthly." The first essay in his volume *Out of the Past* is a review of Bryant's poems, written in 1839, and his last volume was *A New Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 1900. During all the intervening years he took an active interest in matters pertaining to art and literature, and was a figure of some literary importance, though few of his works have a lasting literary quality. Mary Mapes Dodge (1838-1905), a native of New York, was for over thirty years editor of "St. Nicholas," and achieved a national reputation as the



author of stories and verses for children. Her most popular story is "Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates," the scene of which is laid in Holland. She had a sense of humor, and the art of writing stories that children enjoy, rather than those which adults think they ought to enjoy. Richard Grant White (1821-1885) passed his entire life in New York city, and was connected with several newspapers. He published two editions of Shakespeare's works, much Shakespearian criticism, and some popular treatises on modern linguistics. He was also the author of an anonymous political satire, *The New Gospel of Peace according to Saint Benjamin*, a novel, and other works. White maintained some peculiar views regarding the English language, and his manner in his writings was of a nature to attract attention, but not to strengthen his authority. He was a pronounced Anglo-maniac, and he always gave the impression of feeling contempt for anyone who questioned his dogmatic critical dicta. He was really a student of industry and considerable insight, and though not a great scholar, made some valuable contributions to the mass of Shakespearian criticism.

Aside from the editors already mentioned and the poets who were also remembered for their prose, New York produced few important essayists. The influence of Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) was largely due to his published writings, though he might from his twenty years' connection with the New York "Independent" be classed among the editors, and to his contemporaries he was first of all an orator. He was born in Connecticut, a son of the Reverend Lyman Beecher and a brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. After graduating from Amherst college and entering the ministry he preached for a time in Indiana. In 1847 he was called to Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and held the pastorate until his death. Here he soon became recognized as the most

**New York  
Essayists—  
Henry Ward  
Beecher**

influential pulpit orator in America, and his sermons, published week by week from stenographic reports, reached thousands of persons who never heard him preach. He believed in carrying into the pulpit the discussion of ethical and sociological matters and in going out upon the platform to discuss political and social questions. He was a leader in the anti-slavery movement, and during the war he visited England and did much to turn public sentiment, which had been largely with the South. His addresses in some of the manufacturing towns are probably unexcelled in modern times as examples of the art of managing a hostile audience. He was a man of great energy and wide interests. With him religion was a matter of action rather than of belief; and his theological views, always liberal, became so modified that Plymouth Church finally withdrew from the fellowship of Congregational churches. In 1874 his name was involved in a scandal which was discussed throughout the country. Public opinion, like the jury before which the case was tried, disagreed, but the prevailing view was in favor of his innocence. His church was loyal to him, but his influence in the country at large suffered somewhat. He did some editorial work while he was preaching in the West, and later on the New York "Independent." His published works were numerous, and include a novel, *Norwood; or Village Life in New England*, and essays on many subjects; the best, however, are the reports of his spoken discourses.

Directness, practicality, humor, and insight are the characteristics of Beecher's best works. He was never afraid to express his thoughts and he had the knack of hitting upon telling phrases. It was inevitable that work done as his was should be uneven, and after he became famous it was hard for him to avoid publishing the poor as well as the good. His geniality sometimes led him, also, to attempt work for which he was not fitted. It

#### **Beecher's Rank**

was at the solicitation of his friend, Robert Bonner, of the New York "Ledger," that he wrote *Norwood*; neither his previous experiences nor his habits of mind were likely to make him successful in novel-writing. The bulk of his mediocre work has tended to obscure his real merit, but he holds an unquestioned place among the few great American orators, and he should also be remembered as an essayist of much power.

Henry T. Tuckerman (1813-1871), a native of Boston who after 1845 lived in New York, was an essayist of considerable contemporary reputation. In early manhood he spent some time in Italy, and produced the inevitable books of travel. Later he wrote verses and many essays on literature and art. The most readable of the latter are rambling and slow-moving—at times slightly suggestive of Irving—the evident work of a man who has gained much from books and travel. His more formal works, like *Thoughts on the Poets*, are more solid, but lack charm.

Among the New York writers of prose fiction the name of Mr. William Dean Howells would stand first if it were not for the fortunate fact that he is still actively writing, and hence does not come within the scope of this history. In the earlier years of the period New York failed to maintain the reputation of the preceding generation. Not until the later magazine writers were there produced short stories that could compare with those of Irving. And although some of the authors named below wrote stories of adventure no one deserves to be classed with Cooper or above Paulding in this field.

Herman Melville (1819-1891) wrote tales of adventure, both authentic and fictitious. He was the descendant of an old New England family, but his parents removed to New

#### Minor New York Essayists

#### New York Writers of Fiction

York before his birth. He early developed a taste for adventure, which was perhaps strengthened by reading Dana's *Two Years before the Mast*. Before he was twenty he had made a voyage to Liverpool; and in 1841 he joined a whaling crew bound for the Pacific by way of Cape Horn. Before he returned to America in 1845 he deserted the ship, lived for some time with a cannibal tribe on one of the South Sea Islands, escaped in an Australian whaler, was concerned in an incipient mutiny, had various shore experiences on Tahiti, and came home in an American man-of-war. His first book was *Typee*, published in 1846, in which he tells of his experiences among the cannibal tribe. *Omoo* continues his story, and tells of life on the Australian whaler and on Tahiti. These two works are not fiction, but sections of autobiography, told from recollection. Both are simple, straight-forward narratives, and though wholly without plot-interest are fascinating. *Redburn* is a novel based on his early voyage to Liverpool. *White-Jacket* continues the *Typee* and *Omoo* series, and tells of his return voyage on a man-of-war. *Moby Dick, or the White Whale*, is a story of a crazed sea captain who pursued around the world the invincible white whale that had maimed him for life. Many incidents are told with a detail that suggests that they were actual experiences of the author's own whaling voyage. The conception of the story is a powerful one, but it is not adequately sustained. By this time (1850) the author had become deeply interested in abstruse philosophy, and especially, it is said, in Sir Thomas Browne. As a result his style suffered a complete and disastrous change from the directness of *Typee* and *Omoo*. The beginnings of this change are seen in *Moby Dick*; and it is more marked in the author's later prose works, which are hardly readable. *Battle Pieces and Aspects of the War* is a collection of poems, mostly crude and formless, but written with much enthusiasm.

Herman  
Melville

Melville's early work is so good as to cause serious regret at the deterioration of his style.

The Reverend Edward Payson Roe (1838-1888), a novelist of a different sort, must be mentioned because his works afford an index of popular taste. His literary career began in 1872 with the publication of *Barriers Burned Away*, a story of the great Chicago fire. The success of this was so great that the author resigned his pastorate at Highland Falls, near the Hudson, and devoted himself to writing. From this time until his death he published an average of more than a volume a year, all fiction except two or three books on horticulture. Among his novels were *The Opening of a Chestnut Burr*, *Near to Nature's Heart*, and *Nature's Serial Story*. All these were very popular, and at the time of his death his publishers estimated that nearly 1,400,000 copies of his books had been sold. Roe took his writing seriously, visiting factories, jails, and courtrooms for literary material, and he always wrote with a moral purpose. His great success is due in part to the fact that he made use of mildly sensational plots to inculcate moral lessons. His stories are always wholesome and they are sometimes told with power. In both structure and style they are, however, crude and slovenly. Their unequalled popularity shows high moral standards rather than cultivated literary taste on the part of middle class American readers.

Fitz James O'Brien (1828?-1862) wrote poems, essays, and dramas, but is best remembered for a few of his short stories.

He was born in Limerick, Ireland, and educated at the University of Dublin, and is reputed to have run through with a fortune of £8,000 before he came to New York at the age of twenty-four. Here he became a member of the "Bohemian" set, and in the ten years before his death did a great amount of writing for newspapers and magazines. At the opening of the

**E. P. Roe**

**Fitz James  
O'Brien**



Civil War he enlisted in the Union army, and his death was the result of wounds. Some of the best of his work has been collected and edited by his friend, William Winter. O'Brien was a genius of remarkable power and originality. His irregular life and his habits of hasty writing interfered with the production of finished work, and render hazardous any conjecture as to what he might have accomplished if he had not been killed at the early age of thirty-four. It was a hopeful sign, however, that his three best short stories, "The Diamond Lens," "The Wondersmith," and "What Was It? a Mystery," were written in his later years. These three tales are by no means perfect in structure, but they show a marvellous originality of imagination. The unique conception of a being invisible, but palpable to the other senses, which he develops in "What Was It? a Mystery," has since been borrowed by de Maupassant and other artists who deal with the supernatural.

Among the lesser writers of adventure in the early part of the period was Mrs. Caroline M. Kirkland (1801-1864).

After her marriage she lived for a time in Michigan, and her experiences on what was then the frontier furnished the inspiration for her earliest and best writings, *A New*

*Home: Who'll Follow? Forest Life, and Western Clearings.* These tales and sketches, published under the assumed name of Mrs. Mary Clavers, give shrewd, humorous, observant pictures of pioneer life, and lack the exaggeration common in western sketches. Several miscellaneous works published after Mrs. Kirkland's return to New York are unimportant. The literary achievements of Cornelius Mathews (1817-1889) were so varied that he is hard to classify, but he may well be placed among the writers of fiction. He was a New York lawyer, but gave most of his time to literature. His stories *The Career of Puffer Hopkins*, and

**Minor New York  
Writers of  
Fiction**



*Big Abel and the Little Manhattan*, satirize conditions in New York city. Mathews took great interest in the Indians. He published *Behemoth, a Legend of the Mound-Builders*, *Wakendah*, an Indian poem, and a collection of Indian legends adapted from Schoolcraft. Among his other writings are dramas and poems. He had versatility, imagination, and some humor, but was lacking in finish. Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen (1848-1895) was born in Norway and educated at Leipsic and at the University of his native country. He came to America in 1869, and after editing a Norwegian weekly in Chicago and teaching the classics in a western college he became professor of German at Cornell, and afterward at Columbia. Boyesen's masters in fiction were Tolstoi and Turgenieff among Europeans, and Mr. Howells among Americans, and the latter frankly admits that his pupil "out-realisted" him. Boyesen's work has individuality and is pleasingly suggestive of his foreign birth and training. He is at his best in stories that deal with Norwegian life. Some of his tales for boys are especially good.

> In humorists New York was less prolific than were other sections of the country. Robert H. Newell (1836-1901) wrote between 1861 and 1868 a series of political satires which he signed "Orpheus C. Kerr."

**New York  
Humorists**

Nothing in the papers is better than the pun in this signature. Mrs. Frances M. Whitchee (1811-1852), who passed her life in central New York state, was the author of *The Widow Bedott Papers*, and some other humorous sketches in prose. The Widow Bedott is funny chiefly because of her garrulity, and her proclivity for endless digressions in her narratives.

Of the many New York writers who essayed verse, only one, Whitman, is commonly named among the greater American poets. With Whitman were grouped, in the late fifties and early sixties, a small circle nicknamed the Bohemians, whose

rendezvous was Pfaff's restaurant on—or more accurately under—Broadway, near Bleecker street. Many fables are told of this coterie, which seems to have been made up of erratic and often impecunious newspaper men and unattached writers. With the exceptions of Whitman, Fitz James O'Brien, and William Winter most of them are now wholly forgotten. The names of several other New York writers who may have been rare visitors at Pfaff's are sometimes erroneously added to the list. The Bohemians are an interesting literary tradition in New York, but they are more picturesque than significant, and even their picturesqueness has very likely increased with time. The only group of poets which could in any sense be called a New York "school" was composed of Bayard Taylor, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Richard Henry Stoddard, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Of this group Taylor should more properly be considered with the Pennsylvania writers.

Richard Henry Stoddard (1825-1903) was born in Hingham, Massachusetts. His father, a sailor, was lost at sea when he was but a few years old. His mother was left in poor financial circumstances, which were not improved after her second marriage. In 1835 the family went to New York. Here young Stoddard gained a little schooling, but at the age of fifteen he was set to work. He tried all sorts of occupations—errand-boy, shop-boy, copyist in a lawyer's office, blacksmith, molder in an iron foundry, and assistant to a carriage painter. Meanwhile he was reading such poetry as he could lay his hands on, and writing verses for his own amusement. In 1849 he issued his first volume of poems, which he afterward suppressed. In 1852 he was married to Miss Elizabeth Barstow, who also attained some reputation as a writer of verse. By this time he had formed an acquaintance with

**Literary Groups  
and "Schools"  
in New York**

**Richard Henry  
Stoddard**

many men of letters, and through the influence of some of them, especially Hawthorne and Whipple, he secured a clerkship in the New York custom house. This position he held from 1853 to 1870. The next three years he was a clerk in the dock commissioner's office, and for a short time he was city librarian. During his last ten years in the custom house he was literary editor of the New York "World," and from 1880 until his death he filled the same position on the "Mail and Express." He edited and compiled several books, revised Griswold's *Poets of America*, and published several volumes of his own poems, and a collection of essays entitled *Under the Evening Lamp*. His *Recollections*, which he was preparing for the press at the time of his death, appeared posthumously.

It is pleasant to notice that Stoddard's friends and many of his acquaintances speak in the warmest terms of his personality. His prose writings give the impression of a man who was too conscious that he had risen by his own exertions, and who was a little inclined to patronize others. He speaks slightly of his mother, who seems really to have done for him all that her means and her strength allowed. His criticisms are likely to be generalities, or to be warped by apparent prejudice. In his early years Poe declined, in a way that offended him, to publish one of his poems, and he was always fond of repeating the most unfavorable stories regarding Poe, and of characterizing his poems with such penetrating remarks as "The parent of Annabel Lee was Mother Goose." All in all, his critical work is of little value, as regards either content or style.

It is Stoddard's poetry that constitutes his best claim to remembrance. He was of those who care for beauty of form and concept rather than for didacticism; and he had a fine sense of melody. His friends and special admirers are in the

habit of praising his blank verse and his odes, but it seems probable that his lyrics will be more likely to last. Some of the briefest of these, like "Birds," "The Flight of Youth," have a finish and a finality that should insure them a permanent place in any collection of American verse. The longer poems, even those in lyric measures, are likely to be uneven, and in places too obviously imitative.

**Stoddard's  
Poetry**

Edmund Clarence Stedman (1833-1908) was born at Hartford, Connecticut, the descendant of an old New England family. His father died when he was but two years old, and his mother, who was herself a writer of poetry, relinquished him to his father's relatives and married again. He

**Edmund  
Clarence  
Stedman**

entered Yale, where he attracted some attention by his verses, but was rusticated, and then dismissed for general wildness and dissipation. Many years later he made application for his degree and it was granted. After his dismissal from Yale he went South, edited country papers in New England, engaged in the clock business, and was married without his guardian's consent at the age of twenty. In 1855 he became a real estate and general broker in New York. Here he lived in a "Unitary Home," one of the coöperative experiments organized by readers of Fourier, and a number of his associates were writers and newspaper men. His poem, "The Diamond Wedding," a satire on a much heralded society event, was published in the "Tribune" in 1859, and attracted attention which was intensified when the father of the bride demanded "satisfaction" from the young author. A little later he contributed to the "Tribune" "How Old John Brown Took Harper's Ferry," and "The Ballad of Lager Bier"—one a patriotic and the other a humorous lyric. The popularity of these three effusions led to an engagement on the "Tribune," which he soon left for the "World." He was

war correspondent after the attack on Fort Sumter, and for a time held a government clerkship at Washington. In 1863 he came back to New York, and entered Wall Street, becoming a member of the Stock Exchange a few years later. From this time until 1900 his life was a series of financial ups and downs, with much anxiety and never more than moderate success. In 1900 he sold his seat on the Stock Exchange and retired on a rather meager competency to devote himself wholly to literary work.

Stedman always maintained that his chief interests were literary, and that he endured business only for the purpose of winning an opportunity for writing. Notwithstanding the exactions of his feverish life in the Stock Exchange and almost constant ill health, he managed to do a considerable amount of work as editor, as critic, and as poet. He compiled *A Victorian Anthology* and *An American Anthology*, and, at an earlier date, collaborated with Ellen M. Hutchinson in *A Library of American Literature*. He also edited with George E. Woodberry the works of Poe. His important criticism is contained in three volumes, *Victorian Poets*, *Poets of America*, and *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*—the last a series of lectures originally delivered at Johns Hopkins University. He also gave much study to the Sicilian idyllists, but never brought his work into shape for publication. His poems were written at various times throughout his life.

Stedman's letters show him to have been painstaking in matters of scholarly detail, and most of his editing is well done; though students of the *Poe* for which he was in part responsible are sometimes annoyed by errors in collation, and strange decisions in choice of texts. His critical writings deal mostly with poetry. At an early age he arrived at the conclusion that "Beauty is governed by laws as severe and discovera-

**Stedman's  
Literary Labors**

**Stedman as  
Editor and Critic**



ble as are mathematics," and "The great poet—the great artist—is a universalist, an eclectic." These views he never seriously modified, and he developed them in his last and most serious critical volume, *The Nature and Elements of Poetry*. All his critical essays are careful work, based on "reading up" both in the poets themselves and in the writings of other critics—a type of production which every college instructor knows well, and which he should surely honor when it is well done. They are, however, lacking in the flashes of insight that characterize the work of the great critics, and they have little of the personal quality of Lowell's essays. The author sometimes shows erratic appreciations, as when he ranks Lord's turgid lines "On the Defeat of a Great Man" with Whittier's "Ichabod." Often the breadth of his reading in preparation for a paper leads him to give oddly incongruous lists, as: "Bascom and Ruskin follow Mill"; "Browning, Banville, Whitman, Emerson." Notwithstanding these peculiarities his critical writings are solid, and not to be ignored by any student of the subjects which he treats. His *Poets of America* has no real rival in its field.

Stedman's earliest verses in the "Tribune" were only taking work of good newspaper grade, though the careful reader

detects in them hints of such later and more finished poems as "Pan in Wall Street." In his more serious attempts of this time Tennyson was the chief influence, but he succeeded fairly well in being faithful to his belief that the true artist is an eclectic. His longer poems, like "The Blameless Prince," have their excellences but they were never widely popular, and will be less and less read. In his later years he was a successful writer of occasional poems—perhaps the most successful after Holmes. He was at his best, however, in a variety of shorter poems scattered throughout his works—in one or two short patriotic pieces like "Wanted—A Man," in New England idyls

Stedman as  
Poet



like "The Doorstep" and "Country Sleighing," in a trifle like "Toujours Amour," and in his almost unique impassioned song beginning, "Thou art mine, thou hast given thy word." All those named were, as it happens, written before he had passed middle age. But as the stress and disappointment of life grew upon him, he still wrote hopefully and with no less of excellence in form, yet with a calm recognition of the deeper meaning of things.

It is a question whether Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836-1907) should not have been discussed among the New England writers. He was a native of New Eng-

**Thomas Bailey  
Aldrich**

land, he spent a great part of his literary life in Boston, and he felt most at home there. Still, he began to write in New York, and so far as essential characteristics are concerned his poetry had more in common with that of Stoddard and Taylor than with that of his Boston and Cambridge literary friends. Though the least "Bohemian" of the group in temperament he was at one time associated in a literary way with some of the frequenters of Pfaff's restaurant.

Aldrich was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, but spent part of his boyhood in New York and three years in New Orleans. His life after his return to Portsmouth is pictured with reasonable fidelity in *The Story of a Bad Boy*. For financial reasons he did not go to Harvard as he had planned, but at the age of sixteen entered his uncle's business office in New York. Here he began to publish verses and at the age of nineteen brought out a volume of poems. The same year, 1855, he wrote "Baby Bell," his first work to attract general attention. About this time he gave up business, and later held various editorial positions on New York papers. Before he was twenty-three he had published two volumes of verse and one of prose, and had made friends with Willis, Taylor, Stoddard, and other New York literary

men. For a time he was connected with the "Saturday Press," a lively satirical journal founded by Clapp, the "King of Bohemia," with the assistance of two other Bohemians, O'Brien and Winter. At the outbreak of the war he asked for a military appointment, but missed it through an accident. For a few weeks he was war correspondent for the New York "Tribune." By 1865 he had made himself well known as a writer of prose fiction and of verse, and was called to Boston to edit "Every Saturday," a literary paper published by Fields and Osgood. From this time until his death Boston was his literary home, and his actual residence was in the city or not far away. From 1881 to 1890 he edited the "Atlantic." After the latter date he travelled much, spending several summers in Europe and twice going around the world.

Aldrich was a fairly prolific writer, but he was an unsparing critic of himself and he chose carefully the work which he wished to be preserved. He retained not a single poem from his first collection of fifty, and rejected many of later date. His prose works were subjected to the same careful sifting. The residue is contained in seven volumes of prose and two of verse.

Aldrich's novels, *Prudence Palfrey*, *The Stillwater Tragedy*, and others, are well told, but they lack the vitality

**Aldrich's Prose** of his best work. His one long narrative which is sure to live is *The Story of a Bad Boy*. The slight change of Portsmouth to Rivermouth and the name of the hero, Tom Bailey, suggest how largely the story is autobiographical. It is the work of a man who retained full sympathy with his own boyhood and with other boys after he had lived long enough to learn what life really means. His insight into boyish ways suggests Mark Twain in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, but his attitude is more sympathetic and his tone is quieter. Every reader who

was fortunate enough to know the book in his boyhood will still recall passages, humorous and pathetic, which have fixed themselves in his memory. Among these is sure to be the few lines of restrained narrative which tell of the drifting away of Binny Wallace. A comparison of this impressively simple account with the treatment of tragic and pathetic events in other boys' stories will reveal much of the author's nature and the secret of his power. Next to *The Story of A Bad Boy*, Aldrich's best prose is in his short stories. He was a careful student of prose style and of the art of narration, and he has left some of the most carefully planned and delicately wrought stories of the later nineteenth century. > "Marjory Daw," usually conceded to be his masterpiece in short fiction, is one of the two best hoax stories by American authors. That it is, however, more than a hoax is shown by the fact that it may be re-read with little loss of interest. Several other stories have a similar unexpected ending, but he confined himself to no one type of plot. His sketches of travel and the miscellanies in the *Ponkapog Papers* show, like everything else that he did, the charm of his manner, but are relatively unimportant.

After compiling for the complete edition of his works all his poems which he wished preserved, Aldrich made, in the year before his death, a still briefer collection of *Songs and Sonnets* which he evidently felt embodied the best of his verse. This judgment was undoubtedly correct. Much might be said in praise of his longer poems like "Wyndham Towers" and "Judith and Holofernes," but his most distinctive and most remarkable work is in the shorter poems which he called "Interludes." The lightest of these are mere society verse, but many of them, while equally exquisite in form, touch grave themes with an insight and a finality of expression that place them with the truest poetry. There are many of these poems, and no one

will serve as an adequate example, for each has its individual quality.

In all his writings, both prose and verse, Aldrich was an artist, forever striving for perfection of form. He not only rejected his unsuccessful work, but he revised that which he retained with a frequent and minute care that suggests the similar labors of Tennyson. He had a fine feeling for the purity of the English tongue, and he was shocked and pained by the vagaries of some of his later contemporaries. Yet, as he protests in one of his poems, art for art's sake did not mean to him technique for technique's sake. Though he was not a propagandist or a preacher he had the New England conscience, and the New England sense of the deeper things of life; and his work, though never obviously didactic, always rests on a sound and worthy philosophy of things.

Aldrich's reputation as a wit and as a kindly gentleman still makes it difficult to judge his permanent rank. *The Story of a Bad Boy* and some of his best short stories ought to last. Of his poems, "Baby Bell," one of his less distinctive pieces, is still popular after over half a century. It is no doubt a misfortune that his best work is in sonnets or still slighter poems which lack the bulk necessary to make an impression. Such pieces are likely to become mere fugitives, and to be denied credit for the excellence which they really possess. Still, it seems to many of Aldrich's admirers that, whether his popular reputation endures or not, he missed by only the slightest of margins a place with the greater American men of letters.

Taylor, Stoddard, Stedman, and Aldrich constitute the second most important group of American authors in the last half of the nineteenth century. In both external circumstances and literary ideals they offer many points of contrast to the New England poets. They were not born in New York,

but came, one from Pennsylvania, and the others from New England. Two of them, Taylor and Aldrich, lived in New York but a limited time. They were not

**The New  
York "School"  
of Poets**

so fortunate as to cluster about a great college like Harvard, or about a great literary magazine like the "Atlantic." During their formative years such literary connections as they had were largely with newspapers and ephemeral literary magazines. Unfortunately for their fame they lacked a set of admiring friends like those survivors of the golden days in New England who have written so many interesting volumes of recollections and literary reminiscences. They met each other as friends, but privately and informally, and no Boswell has left a very definite record of what they said and did. We know, however, that they agreed—and this is their chief significance as a "school"—in viewing poetry not primarily as an instrument for moral edification, but as an art. It would be misleading to push the comparison far, but in some ways they were related to literature in America as the Pre-Raphaelite group were related to literature in England. The models for their juvenile work were the English poets who had form and music—Keats, Shelley, Tennyson. Among the slight affectations common to all, or at least to all but Stedman, was a fondness for Oriental themes. Stoddard has his "Oriental Songs," and Aldrich his collection, *Cloth of Gold*. The ideal of poetry which these men held was different from that of the New Englanders and, in the view of many persons, higher. Their achievement was by no means to be despised. Still, they never attained a popular recognition at all approaching that of Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, and Holmes. In explanation of this it has been said that the older poets so occupied the public mind that no attention was paid to new ones. The true reason seems to be that they lacked, except here and there, as in Aldrich's "Baby Bell," the touch of

common nature which endeared even the mediocre verse of Longfellow and Whittier to the mass of uncritical readers. On the other hand they often failed—whether for lack of genius or because of diversity of interests—of that absolute perfection of form which makes a poem an undying work of art. More recent writers have inclined to their view of poetry rather than to that of the New England school, and it may be that their influence was more valuable than their achievement. This can hardly be known with certainty until the tendencies of later verse are more clearly evident than they are to-day.

New York attracted many writers of verse who, after their arrival in the city, had little direct connection with any literary set. From Ohio came, in 1852, the Cary sisters, two young women who from pure love of writing had begun to compose verses under most discouraging conditions in their western home, and who had published a joint volume of poems in Philadelphia in 1850. The elder, Alice (1820-1871), wrote a number of prose tales, in the best of which she sketched western life as she had known it. Both she and her sister Phœbe (1824-1871) are now, however, remembered for their poems. Alice was the more voluminous writer, and critics have usually credited her with the greater poetic gift; but none of her verses has equalled in popularity Phœbe's hymn beginning "One sweetly solemn thought," or her humorously philosophical juvenile poem,

Suppose, my little lady,  
Your doll should break her head.

The verses of both incline toward sentimental moralizing. Those of Alice are likely to be more deeply pathetic, and to take a more intense view of things; those of Phœbe are more hopeful, have more humor, and are sometimes, it seems, a little more genuine. Phœbe occasionally takes a shrewd and



kindly view of life that suggests Whittier. Some of Alice's early poems show the influence of Longfellow's moralizing lyrics.

Much younger than the poets already mentioned was Emma Lazarus (1849-1887). She was born in New York city, of an orthodox Jewish family of Portuguese descent. She was precocious, and her first volume of poems was published when she was but eighteen. Her early work was influenced by her devotion to art and music, by Heine, and by Emerson, whom she knew personally. In 1871 she published *Admetus and Other Poems*, and in 1876, *The Spagnoletto*, a tragedy with the scene in Italy in the seventeenth century. The outbreak of anti-Semitic feeling in Europe about 1879 aroused her sympathy for her race, and from that time until her death she gave her best energies to the cause of her people. A collection of miscellaneous poems issued in 1882 bore the title *Songs of a Semite*. *The Dance to Death* is a blank verse drama based on the persecution of the Jews in Thuringia. Among her other works were translations from Heine, and from some of the Hebrew poets; *Alide*, a romance based on Goethe's *Autobiography*; some "prose poems"; and magazine articles on questions relating to the Jews. In much of her work are seen a fine artistic quality and a trace of the rich sensuousness of her race. Some of her earlier narrative poems, like "Admetus" and "Tannhäuser," tell old legends in good blank verse, with much originality, and remarkably visualized description. *Epochs*, a cycle of poems with simple lyrical movements, touches on some of the serious problems of life with great genuineness. Her later poems on Jewish themes are more stirring, but show no loss of artistic power. Her "prose poems," which suggest Whitman, are less successful, as are the dramas. Of the latter, *The Dance to Death* has most merit.

Among lesser poets who came to New York was William R. Wallace (1819-1881), a native of Kentucky. His early occasional poems like "The Battle of Tippecanoe" have music and life, but are close imitations of Byron and at times of Halleck and Holmes. Throughout life he was successful in growing showy flowers from seed furnished by other poets. His patriotic lyric "The Sword of Bunker Hill," though conventional, is less imitative than most of his work. Thomas Dunn English (1819-1902) was born in Pennsylvania and lived at different times in Virginia and New Jersey, but did most of his literary work in New York. He edited a literary magazine, wrote novels and plays, and engaged in an exciting quarrel with Poe. His poems are varied in character, but he is remembered only for his sentimental songs. Of these, "Ben Bolt" attained great popularity when it was published in the "New York Mirror" in 1843, and was recalled to favor when it was inwoven in the plot of Du Maurier's *Tribby* half a century later. William A. Butler (1825-1902) came from Albany to New York for the practice of law. His miscellaneous writings include letters of travel, humorous sketches, papers on art, novels, biography, and several occasional poems. His genius was satiric, and his greatest success was achieved in *Nothing to Wear*, a take-off on the wardrobe of a society woman. The popularity of the poem is due rather to its content than to the poet's art. Charles G. Halpine (1829-1868) was an Irishman, a graduate of Trinity college, Dublin, who entered the journalistic field in New York about 1852. At the beginning of the war he enlisted, and it was while he was at the front that he began to write for the New York "Herald" a series of articles over the signature of Private Miles O'Reilly. The prose that these contain is of little account, but some of the poems attained considerable popularity. These and Halpine's other verses

**Lesser New  
York Poets**

ran smoothly, and had a local and temporary application that gave them vogue, but they are now unimportant. To New York state, though not to the city, belongs Alfred B. Street (1811-1881), for over thirty years state librarian at Albany. He was born in Poughkeepsie, and spent his early years in the picturesque region near the Hudson. Almost all his verse treats of nature, which he portrayed with great accuracy, but with little imagination. His poems were highly praised in their day, but are of the sort that satisfies a critical theory rather than appeals to the heart, and are now almost forgotten.

The most famous and the most difficult to criticise of the New York poets during the mid-century was Walt Whitman (1819-1892). He was born on Long

> **Walt Whitman** Island. His father and mother were of English and Dutch ancestry, respectively. His father was a carpenter, but most of the Whitmans had been farmers. Walt, or as he was named Walter, attended the Brooklyn common schools, and at the age of fourteen learned to set type in a printing office. He taught country school for a winter or two, but most of the time until he was thirty years of age he was employed about Brooklyn and New York newspaper offices as compositor, contributor, editor, and what-not. In 1848 he made a leisurely journey to New Orleans, where he had been offered an editorship on the "Crescent." Soon afterward he returned at a still more leisurely pace by a roundabout route through the West and North. He next published a paper and kept a bookstore, and a little later took up the business of building and selling small dwelling houses in Brooklyn. It was some time in the early fifties that he conceived the idea of writing *Leaves of Grass*, and he brought out his first volume bearing this title in 1855. Late in 1862 he went South in search of his brother, who had been wounded at Fredericksburg, and during the rest of the

war he ministered to the sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals at Washington—serving not as regular nurse, but as visitor, friend, and almoner to those who needed his attentions. He secured a clerkship in the Department of the Interior, but was removed in 1865 as the author of an immoral book. Friends soon procured him another clerkship in the office of the attorney-general, and he held this until 1873, when he was incapacitated for service by a stroke of paralysis. From this time until his death in 1892 he lived the life of an invalid or semi-invalid at Camden, New Jersey.

Whitman's writings before he was thirty-five years of age were those of a miscellaneous contributor to the newspapers and magazines. The few examples which he included in his collected works consist of rather halting conventional verses, and little

**Whitman's  
Writings**

moral tales and sketches, which usually leave a sense of incompleteness, and imply a deficiency in the author's sense of literary form. The peculiar manner which he afterward used almost exclusively in his poems was first employed in his volume published in 1855. As a designation for all his poetical works after this date he adopted the name *Leaves of Grass*. From 1855 to 1891 inclusive he issued ten successively enlarged volumes under this title, each containing his complete poems to the date of publication. The first issue, 1855, was printed partly by Whitman himself, and appeared in Brooklyn without the name of a publisher. The edition of 1881 was suppressed in Massachusetts on the ground that it was obscene. Many other bibliographical facts concerning the various forms of the book are of interest to the special student. Before his death the author also collected into one volume such of his prose work as he wished preserved. His most important essay, "Democratic Vistas," appeared in 1870. The prose volume also includes "Specimen Days," a scrappy series of autobiographic memoranda, and many short mis-

cellaneous pieces. The *Letters to Peter Doyle*, *The Wound-Dresser*, made up chiefly of letters to his mother, the *Diary in Canada*, and other posthumous publications are of some biographic value.

The main facts of Whitman's life as already given are well known; but there is a scarcity of the more detailed information that would enable one to form a sure estimate of the man and his character.

**Whitman's  
Character**

Though far from reticent so far as his ordinary actions were concerned, he was secretive regarding other affairs. His relations to women have been a subject of much discussion and conjecture, which is justifiable in so far as further knowledge of his life might aid in the interpretation of some of his poems. In his Bohemian days in New York he indulged in all the dissipations of a great city. Late in life he admitted that he was the father of children still living, but nothing is known of their mother or mothers, or of the circumstances that attended his breaches of conventional social usage. His later life was, so far as direct evidence shows, exemplary. The charge of disgustingly intense egotism has been brought against him, and has been strenuously denied. So far as this rests on the use of the first person in his poems it may be considered as disproved; but there are other facts not easily explainable on any other theory. He took pleasure in commendation by any newspaper, no matter how insignificant, and he was in the habit of writing notices of himself and distributing them to editors and reporters. His personal letters, in which the pronoun "I" can surely have no unusual meaning, tell seriously and with monotonous frequency the most absurdly trivial details of his life. The persistent use of the nickname "Walt" instead of his baptismal name Walter, and the habitual wearing of a distinctive dress, seem to show an affectation that is found only with egotism. On the other hand many of his



letters and other prose writings indicate a man of great genuineness, simplicity, and unselfishness. The impressions that he made on others were various. His friends and some casual acquaintances speak of the charm of his personality. Others agree more nearly with Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who says that he seemed, in Lanier's phrase, a "dandy roustabout," and gave the impression "not so much of manliness as of Boweriness."

From the mass of conflicting evidence it seems probable that Whitman was in youth a man of perfect bodily health, though not a man of athletic temperament, or one who took much pleasure in his own bodily exertions. He was mentally alert and wonderfully sensitive to the impressions made by the varied activities of human life. Nature appealed to him most strongly in her larger and freer aspects, such as the sea; and man in his aspect of energetic, practical, creative laborer. He took great pleasure in the society of omnibus drivers, ferry boat pilots, horse car conductors, and other men of rude manners, but of real capability. His trip to the West and South added to his knowledge of the common people of America. This affection for men, not in mass, but as individual living human beings, was his most marked characteristic. He wrote, "There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well." It is significant that notwithstanding his advocacy of the American ideal he never thought of enlisting in the Civil War and fighting for a principle. Once his sympathies were aroused, however, by the sight of the sufferings in the army hospitals he voluntarily gave to individuals services more valuable and more trying than those of most soldiers in the field. To this hospital experience he recurred more frequently and with greater satisfaction than to anything else in his career. It is to *The Wound-Dresser* and the hospital passages of "Specimen Days"



that those who doubt after reading the poems should turn before forming an adverse estimate of the man. Personally he was much given to posing, but his moments of genuineness made a powerful impression on those who were so fortunate as to behold them.

The impulse that led to the writing of *Leaves of Grass* is believed by the poet's worshippers to have been an inspiration akin to that of the older prophets. To unsympathetic critics it has seemed an attempt on the part of a man who had failed in ordinary literary forms to attract attention by oddity. Neither of these judgments is probably wholly true. The doctrine of the importance of the individual human soul, as announced by Emerson and other transcendentalists, may have suggested to an experimenter in literary fields the idea of a new and different literature of which this doctrine should be the center. Once started, he became a lifelong apostle of what he called democracy. After a study of both his prose and his poetry it is hard not to believe that, though he was egotistical and self-conscious, he was in the main sincere. He evolved his poems with pains at first, and frequently revised and elaborated them afterward. As he considered *Leaves of Grass* a unified work rather than a collection he took equal pains in regard to grouping and arrangement.

The most striking characteristic of Whitman's poetry is its lack of ordinary verse form. Except in a few cases it is without rhyme or sustained metre. For these it substitutes a rude and irregular rhythm, akin to that which is found, it is said, in the chants of primitive peoples. Many lines, often first lines, are examples of the highest rhythmical effects; but two lines with the same rhythm are rarely found together. An attempt to read such work as verse is sure to result disastrously. To

#### Motive in Writing

#### Verse Form

appreciate it, one should read it as he reads the finer parts of the King James version of the *Bible*, simply as rhythmical prose. Treated in this way much of it will be found to have a subtle melody which is more and more impressive as the ear becomes accustomed to it. The author says that many of the poems were directly inspired by music; and some of them suggest in a vague way the movement of great orchestral pieces.

The power of Whitman's poems comes, not so much from long passages taken as wholes, as from short suggestive phrases. It is probable that in other poetry this is true more often than is generally realized. The success of rhymes in which good phrases are deliberately woven together to make nonsense, and the frequency with which readers are moved by sounding verse that they do not fully understand, illustrate how much is due to the suggestiveness of telling words and groups of words. The art of making these effective phrases Whitman had in a remarkable degree; and he also relied much on the picturing power of simple terms. This he carried to an extreme in his long catalogues of objects or attributes, often thrown together promiscuously:

The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds of listeners,  
 Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness, the individuality of the States, each for itself—the money-makers,  
 Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass, lever, pulley, all certainties,  
 The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,  
 In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on the firm earth the lands, my lands.

If this sort of thing is ever poetry it is because the reader finds in the long list some items that appeal to his imagination.

Whitman's chief idea, as has been said, is that of democracy. By this word, as he shows in his chief prose work

"Democratic Vistas," he means a conception of man and of the universe to which all earlier civilizations have been tending, and in accordance with which shall come the fullest development of the future.

**Whitman's  
Philosophy**

He accepts something resembling the transcendental doctrine of the individual. In his many poems written in the first person he uses "I" and "me" to designate not alone himself, but every man and woman. Moreover, he believes that as all objects, actions, and attributes are part of the divine scheme, nothing is to be despised or thought unworthy of celebration in poetry. The severest censure which he received was directed against those poems in which he extended this theory to the phenomena of sex. Sex is, according to the poet, as pure and as natural as anything else in human experience, and should be treated as freely. Much may be said in favor of this theory as a theory, but the results of its application are displeasing to most persons. The majority of Americans are also too puritanical to accept a new poetry of the sex relation from a man whose own life had not conformed to conventional standards of morality. It may indeed be questioned whether if Whitman had married and become the father of a family he would have written some of the passages which have given offence. In view of the fact that so many prejudices and preconceived notions enter into our estimate of poems on this subject, it is safer to judge first of the author when he violates not moral but purely esthetic sensibilities. His whole philosophy stands or falls with such passages as

The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail ;

or,

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am  
touched from,  
The scent of these arm-pits, aroma finer than prayer.

All men honor the surgeon, and any squeamishness on his part would be a misfortune to humanity. In the eyes of science there is no essential difference between the biologic processes that produce beautiful or repulsive forms, or between the chemical processes that yield pleasant or unpleasant odors. The question is whether art is as inclusive as science. This every reader must answer for himself; and his answer will decide the question whether, for him, Walt Whitman is the prophet of a new poetry.

Such a prophet the author undoubtedly believed himself to be. He proclaimed that the poetry of the future was not **His Conception** only to be new in substance and form, but **of his Art** that it was to supersede all that had gone before. It was to sing of the artisan equally with the noble, of the body equally with the soul, of death equally with life. In form it was to be unrestricted by laws of metre, it was to use the slang of the street as well as bookish diction, and, in America, it should contain French and Spanish expressions in proportion as French and Spanish elements enter into national life. It was to celebrate "adhesiveness," an extraordinary, intense friendship between man and man, which is perhaps the most perplexing of the author's conceptions. All these characteristics, which he enumerated in "Democratic Vistas" and other prose essays, are seen in his own poems. From the first conception of *Leaves of Grass* he apparently held his views almost unchanged. His later poems have a little less of the physical and more of the spiritual element, and are slightly less eccentric in form; but the difference indicates only an advance in years and experience, not a change of philosophy.

The reader who rejects Whitman as a philosopher and a prophet should not summarily dismiss his poetry as unworthy of attention. To such a critic a careful study **His Poetry** of his work will show many deficiencies and many beauties. Among the deficiencies are the lack of any

romantic element, of humor, and of sure taste. Romantic love, or even the more tender emotions centering around childhood, is rarely mentioned. The relations of the sexes and other relations within the family are thought of much as a sociologist might think of them. The lack of humor and of sure taste go together. The author was unable to see the ridiculous side of his own work. His long catalogues of things, his affected use of strange words, and his incongruous groupings of ideas were by no means necessary results of his poetic theories. His prose, though readable and valuable for the light it throws on the author and his views, has even more artistic defects than the poems. Sentences are scrappy and disconnected, often ungrammatical. On the other hand, almost anyone may gain inspiration, as did John Addington Symonds, from the broad free view and the contagious optimism of the poet. To those who care for the picturing force of words his many exquisite lines and phrases are sure to appeal; and many readers will find in the subtle melody of his finer compositions, as, for example, "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd," a charm rarely equalled in more formal verse.

Whitman has been the unfortunate center of a fierce discussion in which both friends and enemies have gone to extremes. A letter from Emerson commending the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which with questionable taste Whitman made public, was misunderstood, though it helped to gain the popular ear. *The Good Gray Poet*, an excited, illogical pamphlet in which W. D. O'Connor expressed his indignation at Whitman's dismissal from the Interior Department, was the first and perhaps the worst of a series of absurd defences and panegyrics. On the whole these writings of foolish friends did the poet more harm than the attacks of his enemies. The most bitter attacks were based on misunderstandings of the

### His Rank

poems. Critics who grasped the author's theories but believed them wrong have mostly written with calmness and dignity. In Europe, especially on the Continent, it has been the fashion to look on Whitman as the one distinctively American poet, in whom the American idea found its appropriate expression. This is due in part to a misconception of American civilization, in part to the fact that the poet's ideas harmonize with those of the most audacious old-world reformers. For many years the majority of American critics spoke of Whitman only to ridicule his form and condemn his morals, and the great mass of Americans, whom he claimed to represent, found his work unreadable. He is still almost unknown to the common people for whom he wished to speak. Cultured readers, however, have come to take his poems more seriously. Much of the admiration professed for his work is intelligent, but the element of fad may be seen in the fact that many persons are equally devotees of Whitman and of Poe—two men whose theories of poetry are the most diverse and irreconcilable to be found in literature. While his extreme manner has found few imitators, his influence has been strong on recent poets both in England and America.

## VI. PENNSYLVANIA WRITERS

Philadelphia continued as in the earlier years of the century to be a literary center of importance without numbering among its permanent residents many writers of high rank. It was noteworthy, especially before 1860, for the publication of annuals and popular magazines. Among the latter "Godey's Lady's Book" and "Graham's Magazine" long held national reputations. Some of the more important editors of these, like Griswold and Poe, did most of their literary work elsewhere. Others of lesser consequence, like Mrs. Sarah J. Hale, Eliza

**Philadelphia  
Periodicals**



Leslie, and a little later Willis Gaylord Clark and R. T. Conrad, fairly belong to Philadelphia.

Mrs. Sarah J. Hale (1788-1879), born Buell, was a native of New Hampshire. At the age of thirty-four she was left a widow with five small children, and, as she was fond of reminding her readers, turned to literary work for support. For some time she conducted the "Ladies' Magazine" in Boston, and in 1837 became editor of "Godey's Lady's Book." She also edited annuals, among them the "Opal," and was the author of a novel, a tragedy, several volumes of poems, and other miscellaneous work. Her prose and verse are both highly moral and commonplace, even for writings of their class. Eliza Leslie (1787-1858), a contributor to "Godey's" and editor of an annual, the "Gift," published besides a classic cook-book some mildly humorous tales and sketches. Willis Gaylord Clark (1810-1841), a twin brother of Lewis Gaylord Clark, was editorially connected with several Philadelphia journals. His poems, in smooth academic form, incline to melancholy—a fact that may be associated with the early death by consumption of both his wife and himself. His prose, on the other hand, consists mostly of brief humorous sketches. Robert Taylor Conrad (1810-1858), a Philadelphia lawyer, in early life editor of two newspapers, and later of "Graham's Magazine," was the author of a few poems and of three plays, of which "Aylmere, or the Bondman of Kent," was successfully acted by Forrest.

A more important editor and miscellaneous literary worker was Charles Godfrey Leland (1824-1903). He was born in Philadelphia, and after taking his degree at Princeton and studying abroad contributed to many of the leading magazines of the country. For a time he edited a Philadelphia newspaper. He had wide interests and a fondness for curious researches.

**Minor  
Philadelphia  
Editors**

**Charles  
Godfrey Leland**

One of his early writings was on "The Poetry and Mystery of Dreams;" and later he published the results of interesting studies on the gipsy language and customs, on the legends of the Algonquins, on the early discovery of America by the Chinese, etc. Besides these he wrote sketches of travel and edited a series of art manuals. He was a careful observer, and what he has to say is valuable; but his prose works are sometimes slightly but unfortunately flippant and discursive. His most popular literary work was the *Hans Breitmann Ballads*, which began to appear in 1857. These are burlesques in German-American dialect on the peculiar idealistic German who was turned loose on America by the troubles of 1848, and below the broad fun on the surface they show the author's interest in the study of odd types of character.

Leland was associated with a group of Philadelphia writers which included Robert Montgomery Bird, George H. Boker, Bayard Taylor, and, a little apart from the others, Thomas Buchanan Read. These men agreed in caring much for the artistic side of literature. The more typical members of the group, Bird, Boker, and Taylor, all attempted dramatic composition.

Robert Montgomery Bird (1805-1854) was educated as a physician, but early turned to literature. He began with plays, of which the most famous, "The Gladiator," was a favorite with Forrest, the actor. He then wrote *Calavar* and *The Infidel*, two romances of which the scene is laid in Mexico, and followed these by other fiction. All his work is of a highly romantic order. His stories are weak in plot, but hold interest by a succession of incidents.

A far abler man was George H. Boker (1823-1890). He was a native of Pennsylvania and a graduate of Princeton, a man born to wealth and social position, who followed litera-

ture because he loved it. During the war he was the leader of the Union League Club of Philadelphia, and later was minister to Turkey and to Russia. After **George H. Boker** some early poems he wrote four tragedies, "Calaynos," "Anne Boleyn," "Leonor de Guzman," and "Francesca da Rimini." His *Plays and Poems*, collected in 1856, include two lighter dramatic compositions. Later publications were *Poems of the War*, *Street Lyrics*, *Koenigsmark and Other Poems*, *The Book of the Dead*, and a volume of *Sonnets*.

Boker's tragedies have intense and over-romantic plots, and make use of all the old-fashioned devices of the dramatist. "Calaynos" and "Leonor de Guzman" have Spanish settings. The best is "Francesca da Rimini," which still holds the stage. The story as told by Dante is amplified, and so managed that the hearer is led to sympathize with all three lovers. The prominent use of the court fool in developing the action and the frequent asides are conventionalities which were more tolerable sixty years ago than they are to-day. In spite of artificiality, however, the story has unity and consistency, and never drags. The blank verse is well handled, though it does not rise to great heights. Boker's lyrical poems sometimes suggest Shelley and occasionally Tennyson, but can never be called imitative. His sonnets, which Leigh Hunt thought the best on the legitimate model produced in America, show rather too much influence of the Elizabethan sonneteers. His work, throughout, is that of a man of taste and enthusiasm for literature who has a considerable, but not the highest, literary gift.

Bayard Taylor (1825-1878), or as he was known until early manhood James Bayard Taylor, was distinctively a product of Pennsylvania, though many of his literary associations were with New York, and he has already been mentioned in connection with the New York

group. He was born in Kennett Square, Chester County, Pennsylvania. His ancestry included both Quaker and Lutheran elements. After a precocious boyhood, in which he showed his fondness for books, he spent a short time in an academy, and at seventeen was apprenticed to a country printer. Even before this he had contributed poems to the Philadelphia papers, and in 1844 he published on the advice of Griswold his first volume of poems. He had always wished to travel, and now, on the strength of the slight literary reputation derived from his book, he secured contracts from several papers to write letters from abroad. His first visit to Europe, which occupied two years and covered parts of England, Scotland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, and France, was made at an expense of about \$500. His newspaper letters were collected in 1846 into his first book of travel, *Views Afoot*.

From this point Taylor's varied and industrious career cannot be traced in detail. For a time he published a country paper, and then went to New York on the staff of the "Tribune." In 1850 came the culmination of the tragic romance of his life. He had long been betrothed to Mary Agnew, a Quaker girl. For some time it had been evident that she was afflicted with consumption, and the lovers were married in full anticipation of her death, which occurred two months later. The success of *Views Afoot* and the author's love of new scenes united in urging him to travel. He went to California in the days of the gold excitement; and before his death he had the Holy Land, India, Iceland, and most corners of the more visited, besides many sections of the United States, Egypt, frequented countries. From all these places he wrote letters, which were afterward collected into volumes. It was in Germany that he felt most at home; and here, in 1857, he married Marie Hansen, who survived to write his life and

edit his works. After his second marriage he bought a tract of land and built a mansion near his boyhood home. The desire of founding an estate, which has been disastrous to so many men of letters, was strong upon him. He went beyond his means and although he slaved at lecturing and literary hackwork, he was still embarrassed financially. Just as all things began to look brighter he died, in 1878, soon after he had taken his place as United States minister to Germany.

It was partly the pressure of external circumstances and partly the inherent activity of his mind that led Taylor to undertake so many kinds of writing. Besides **Taylor's Poems** the merest hackwork, such as newspaper correspondence, editing, and compiling school histories, he attempted various forms of poems, the drama, books of travel, short stories, novels, literary essays, literary burlesques, and translations; and at the time of his death was planning a life of Goethe. He is said to have valued his own prose lightly, but to have cared much for the name of poet; and it is in his poetry that his development may best be traced. Of his first two or three volumes of poems, little need be said except that they possess some of the qualities of the later work. *Poems of the Orient*, 1854, shows how strong a hold the East took on his passionate nature. Few other poets have put into their work so much of the sensuous spirit of the Oriental lands and still kept themselves so free from sensuality. These poems show the influence of Shelley, and are over-intense, over-rhetorical, yet the best of them must be ranked high among American lyrics. *The Poet's Journal*, 1862, is a sort of serious medley, with a little of a story told, and more implied by interwoven lyrics. It is really the account of the author's first and second loves, and culminates with the birth of his child. From this time on the echoes in his poems are of Tennyson rather than of Shelley, and there are hints of Swinburne, and, in subject and treatment, of Lowell. From

this time, too, he felt moved to attempt higher things in poetry. The *Picture of Saint John*, 1866, *Lars, a Pastoral of Norway*, the "Gettysburg Ode," and above all his dramatic works and the translation of *Faust* are more ambitious than anything that he had undertaken before.

Taylor's moral ideals were as pure as those of the New England poets, and at bottom he had some of their tendency

to didacticism. Like his associates in New York, however, he believed that the highest quality of poetry is beauty. His artistic in-

**Conception  
of Poetry**

stincts were strong in all directions, and at times he devoted himself with some earnestness to painting. In his early years he inclined to the prevailing sentimentalism, and later there was an element of artistic mysticism in his work. His taste ripened late, as none knew better than himself. In the end, his critical judgment was stronger than his creative power. As a result, his later work—indeed nearly all after the *Poems of the Orient*—seems too carefully wrought out to move the reader. The odes and many lyrics in "Prince Deukalion" and other works have few flaws in structure, but they lack the charm of the Shelleyan and rhetorical "Bedouin Song." Taylor was a true poet, who fell just a little short of fulfilling his great promise.

Of the original dramatic works "The Prophet" is the only one that is strictly a drama. The subject, Mormonism, is

ill adapted to a play, the structure is poor, and the blank verse is by no means the author's best. "The Masque of the Gods" and

"Prince Deukalion" are dramatic poems in which spirits and the Gods of old speak. They teach, in a veiled allegorical way, the author's later religious beliefs. The best parts of both are the lyrics that are frequently interspersed. "Prince Deukalion" shows the influence of the author's study of *Faust*. The translation of Goethe's masterpiece is probably

**Dramatic Works**



Taylor's highest achievement. He devoted to it some of the best years of his life; and though he had not high scholarship, he had the scholarly enthusiasm that stops at no labor. Critics of his *Faust* have generally given high praise to the subtle interpretation of the original.

The novels, *Hannah Thurston*, *John Godfrey's Fortunes*, *The Story of Kennett*, and *Joseph and his Friend*, appeared between 1863 and 1870. The scenes of all are

#### Novels

laid in America and the first three are in part autobiographical. *Hannah Thurston* is another of the many unsuccessful attempts to write a story of American village life. It deals with the reforms and -isms of the mid-century, and shows how Taylor felt toward some of his strict neighbors. The plot is poorly organized and the story often drags. *John Godfrey's Fortunes* was evidently suggested by some of the author's literary experiences. The scenes, and to some extent the incidents, in *Kennett* are avowedly drawn from life in his own neighborhood. As novels, none of these works ranks very high; but they show some of the author's views, and especially his thorough Americanism and belief in democracy. The short stories, potboilers written for magazines, are in structure little better than the novels.

Taylor's critical essays, as represented in the volume collected by his wife, are mostly disappointing. They rarely show insight; when they are best they are

#### Critical Writings

commonplace, and when they differ from received opinion they are often absurd. *The Echo Club* is a series of burlesques suggested by early literary recreations of Taylor, Stoddard, O'Brien, and others.

Taylor's best prose work is probably that which he valued least, his books of travel. He had an observing eye, a ready sympathy, and good powers of description. He rarely moralized, or sentimentalized, or lectured on history or science.

He knew better than to write long descriptions of nature without introducing in some way a human interest. He told his own experiences, keeping himself in the center, and still his narratives never seem egotistical. It is doubtful if truer, saner, better written books of travel have been produced in America. Even to-day, when such works are wholly out of fashion, the reader who picks up one of these old volumes is loth to lay it down.

**Books of  
Travel**

Taylor felt when he accepted the ministry to Germany that he was just getting ready for his best work. It may be doubted whether if he had lived his literary hopes would have been gratified. He was too much the victim of circumstances, he had too many ambitions, he attempted too many kinds of work, to do his best; and it is uncertain just how great that best might have been. He became, with the possible exception of Whitman, the most eminent literary man of the middle states in his time; and the sweetness of his personality, his conscientious industry, and the disappointment of his aspirations constituted a tradition which, after his death, tended to perpetuate his memory. How much of his work, aside from the translation of *Faust*, will be remembered in fifty years is a question hard to answer.

**Rank**

Thomas Buchanan Read (1822-1872) was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, of parents in poor financial circumstances. He was apprenticed to a tailor, but ran away to Philadelphia and afterward to the West. Before he was twenty years of age he had been grocer's clerk, cigar-maker, sculptor, sign-painter, actor, and artist. Much of his later life was spent abroad, where he painted the portraits of many distinguished people, and less successful fanciful pictures. His many poems were published at intervals from 1847 to his death. Among

**Thomas  
Buchanan  
Read**

them are *The New Pastoral* in thirty-six books, which treats of pioneer life in America, *The House by the Sea*, *The Wagoner of the Alleghanies*, a tale of Revolutionary times, and *The Good Samaritans*. Besides these longer works he wrote many lyrics and shorter poems. He had the artistic instinct, in verse as in painting, but he wrote too freely, and with too little self-criticism. He had a fondness for strongly accentuated rhythms, for lines rhyming in triplets, and for mechanical arrangements of his poems. He is at his best in his lyrics, of which the most popular example is "Sheridan's Ride."

## VII. SOUTHERN WRITERS

In the South conditions were still unfavorable to the production of literature. There were fewer cities than in the North, and hence fewer literary centers; and facilities for publishing were not so readily at hand. Both custom and temperament inclined the more cultured Southerners to the appreciation rather than the creation of literature; and if they wrote at all it was likely to be for recreation, and in the spirit of a dilettante. It is noticeable that though the patricians were often the most generous contributors to Southern literary magazines, a good proportion of the writers who are best remembered, such as Poe, Simms, and Timrod, represented less exclusive social circles. Before the war politics offered the most attractive field for men of intellectual tastes who might have attained some excellence in letters. Indeed, most historians of Southern literature have enlarged their lists of authors by including men who are chiefly distinguished in political history. Southern statesmen maintained, as they always have, a high average of excellence as orators and as writers on public affairs, but few of them merit much consideration as men of letters. The war left the South unfitted, for a few

Literature in  
the South

years, to do much in literature. Although a considerable number of Southern writers have since arisen, most of them belong to the period after 1883.

Baltimore was always a center of culture, particularly of Roman Catholic culture; and in the latest years of the period

### Baltimore Writers

Johns Hopkins University attracted men devoted to the newer scholarship. Baltimore periodicals were among the best in the South.

Among the writers who were temporarily drawn there were Poe and Father Ryan. Few, however, of the permanent residents of the city deserve mention. George H. Calvert (1803-1889), a descendant of the founder of Maryland, lived near Baltimore until 1843, when he removed to Rhode Island. He studied at Harvard, at Goettingen, and later edited a Baltimore paper, and published translations from the German, and many original works, both prose and verse. His prose essays show an attempt to be aphoristic, and at times suggest the influence of Emerson, but are on the whole a rather artificial expression of commonplace thought. His two plays, in blank verse, seem to have been modelled on the more intense work of the Elizabethans. His poems are characterized by artificial diction. His work is that of a gentleman of culture and wide interests, who is not quite sure in taste, and who allows himself to be over-ambitious.

The literary career of Sidney Lanier (1842-1881) is associated with the newer intellectual movement in Baltimore,

though the greater part of his life was spent farther South. He was born in Macon,

Georgia, of good family, though not of the oldest Southern aristocracy. His father was a successful lawyer. Even as a boy he was noteworthy as a musician. He entered Oglethorpe college, a small sectarian institution at Midway, Georgia, and on his graduation in 1860 was made tutor. His ambition was to study in Germany and become a college

teacher, but this was frustrated by the war. He enlisted in the Confederate army in 1861, and served in the line, as scout, and in the signal service. He was finally captured on board a blockade runner and confined in Point Lookout prison. After the war he was clerk in a hotel, principal of an academy, and from 1868 to 1872 an assistant in his father's law office. His only important publication up to this time was *Tiger Lilies*, a novel begun while he was in the army, and finished in 1867. He had always retained his interest in literature and music, however, and had worked when time permitted on a volume of prose essays and on a long poem, "The Jacquerie," neither of which was ever completed. In the winter of 1872-3 he resolved to devote himself to the life of an artist and a scholar.

Even before this he was afflicted with consumption, but he did not lose hope. He went to Baltimore, where he played first flute in the Peabody Orchestra, and revelled in the opportunities for study afforded by the Peabody library and the newly-organized Johns Hopkins University. From this time until his death in 1881 his life was a brave struggle against disease and financial embarrassment, and in the last years a race with death to see how much he could accomplish before the end. At first he was obliged to leave his wife and children at the South, but after a time the returns from his music and from his literary work enabled the family to live quietly at Baltimore. "Corn," his first poem to attract much notice, was published in 1875. This aided him in forming several literary friends, and through one of these, Bayard Taylor, came the invitation to write the cantata for the opening of the Centennial Exposition. This made him better known, though the production itself adds little to his poetic fame. His first volume of verse appeared in 1877. A book on Florida, 1876; *The Boy's Froissart*, 1878; *The Boy's King Arthur*, 1880; *The*

**Lanier in  
Baltimore**

*Boy's Mabinogion*, 1881; and the posthumously published *Boy's Percy* were hackwork, though the editing of the old romances was by no means distasteful to him. He organized classes of ladies for the study of literature, and in 1879 was appointed lecturer in English literature in Johns Hopkins. He projected several scholarly works, of which he published only one, *The Science of English Verse*, 1880. Since his death have appeared several volumes of his writings, including a complete edition of his poems, his letters, some collections of his essays, and his lectures on The English Novel and on Shakespeare and his Forerunners.

All who knew Lanier testify to his personal charm. He was a man of wide interests and broad views and sympathies.

**Lanier's Personality** While he never lost for a moment his devotion to the South, after the war he accepted the inevitable, and looked to the future rather than the past. He was born in one of the more democratic of the Southern states, and he responded to influences that were not strong in the South—notably modern scientific thought and German transcendentalism. He was able, therefore, to stand in close relations with men in both sections of the country. The pathos of his life, his personal sweetness, his relations to the new and the old South, and to one of the younger American universities all make his story one of interest, but tend to render difficult a just estimate of his importance. By his admirers he has been praised as a scholar, a prose essayist, and a poet.

Lanier had some of the characteristics of a scholar—interest in many subjects, a consciousness of his own deficiencies, and an ambition to learn. While in the

**Lanier's Scholarship** army, and while at work under the most discouraging circumstances in the South, he managed to learn many things, and particularly to become well read in older English literature. When he decided on a



literary career he felt the need of a broader and more thorough training, and set himself to acquire it. His biographer prints an interesting letter in which, in 1877, he applied for a fellowship at Johns Hopkins University in order that he might study the physics of musical tone, mineralogy, botany, comparative anatomy, French, and German—a course which he goes on to say “makes straight towards the final result of all my present thought.” There is a strange mixture of the ludicrous and the pathetic in the idea of an invalid of thirty-five proposing to master these diverse branches of knowledge in order that he might become a poet. With all his enthusiasm, however, he lacked the patience and the sound judgment of a true scholar. He was too ready to speak and write before he had investigated his subject deeply and made certain of his conclusions. It would be unfair to judge him severely on account of his India papers, imaginative magazine articles into which he worked much half-assimilated guide-book information, or by his lectures on the novel and Shakespeare; but the same unripeness is evident in *The Science of English Verse*, which he deliberately published as a contribution to scholarship. His lack of sure judgment is shown in his tendency to give the highest praise to minor writers who took his fancy.

The exuberance and lack of sureness which characterized his scholarship also account for the chief defects of his prose.

His early novel, *Tiger Lilies*, is strained, rhetorical, and overfanciful in imagery. These faults he outgrew to some extent, but few pages of even his latest prose are wholly free from them. This is the more surprising since he himself points them out in an early bit of self-criticism. A few of his letters are charming revelations of a charming personality, but most of them—even those to his wife—are highly artificial, full of bookish words, and archaic forms, and unnatural, involved sentences.

#### Lanier's Prose

Lanier's chief literary ambition was in the direction of poetry. He wrote: "I know . . . that I am in soul, and shall be in life and utterance, a great poet." His achievement can in fairness be judged only in connection with his theories of music and poetry. To his mind the relations between these two forms of art are far closer than has usually been supposed. He believed that a poem should have a solid basis of idea, but he emphasized the fact that it should appeal to the ear through subtle effects of appropriate tone-color and rhythm. It is the form rather than the idea that is striking in his verse. Indeed, his thought, except in poems like the "Hymns of the Marshes," in which he shows the response of his imaginative temperament to the influence of nature, is likely to be commonplace. The ideas that maize rather than cotton will save the agricultural industries of the South, which underlies "Corn," and that the nation is too much absorbed in sordid trade, which underlies "The Symphony," seem when stated baldly to be hardly worth the poet's while. Worse than the triteness of his ideas is his torturing and twisting them in strange long-drawn-out figures and odd conceits. As a poet even more than as a prose writer he found it impossible to think and speak simply, clearly, and naturally. What Edmund Gosse calls his "strain and rage" was probably due not alone to a striving after poetic effect in accordance with his theories, but to the immaturity of his taste and thought. For, although he was in his fortieth year when he died, he seemed as immature at the end as some boys of twenty.

Among Lanier's most striking poems are "The Symphony," "The Marshes of Glynn," and "Sunrise." In the first the author attempts to suggest by both the music and the idea of different parts of the poem the effect of different orchestral instruments. In the other

### Lanier's Conception of Poetry

### Lanier's Poems

two poems the verse is even more musical and more artificial. His use of alliteration and tone-color, and some of his rhythms, suggest Swinburne—the modern English poet whom he most disliked. Better than the longer poems, though less distinctive, are a few lyrics in which he deliberately and avowedly worked out a conceit. Among these is the much praised “Ballad of Trees and the Master,” which, with its pun on the word “tree,” is after all somewhat forced. Still better is the “Evening Song,” in which are blended with remarkable effect the Elizabethan and the nineteenth century conceptions of love.

Lanier wrote at a time when North and South were becoming reconciled, and when Northern critics, in their desire to

**Lanier's Rank** be fair, gave eager recognition to a promising Southern man of letters. He attracted little attention abroad, but at home he had, and still has, a considerable body of enthusiastic readers. Even these are wont to admit that he must be judged not so much by what he did as by what he would have done. He stands as the most distinguished literary man of the New South; but it is by no means certain that when the careers of the many successful Southern writers now living are completed he will deserve this distinction.

If Virginia had a literary center it was Richmond, which in the old days was a city of much culture. Here was published the “Southern Literary Messenger.”

**Virginia—the Brothers Cooke** most frequently remembered in connection with Poe, but the leading magazine of the South both before and after his editorship. Other and shorter lived periodicals had considerable merit. Among the representative Virginia writers was Philip Pendleton Cooke (1816-1850), a graduate of Princeton. He studied law, but devoted himself largely to writing and sportsmanship. He published in the periodicals a few prose tales and part of a

romance. His only volume was *Froissart Ballads and other Poems*, 1847. The preface announces the plan of turning stories from Froissart into verse, but only three such narratives are given. The rest of the volume is taken up with verse tales of his own invention, and miscellaneous poems, including his best remembered lyric, "Florence Vane." The author may be taken as a type of the Virginia gentleman of family and wealth who dabbled in literature for his own pleasure. His younger brother, John Esten Cooke (1830-1886), came to take letters more seriously. After studying law he turned his attention to romance writing, and in 1854 published three works, *Leather Stocking and Silk*, *The Virginia Comedians*, and *The Youth of Jefferson*. The scenes of all these are laid in Virginia in pre-Revolutionary times. *Leather Stocking and Silk* is a tale of pioneer days in the Shenandoah Valley. *The Youth of Jefferson* is a story of college life at Williamsburg, based on tradition and on some slight hints in the early letters of Jefferson. It is an intensely romantic story of love and gallantry, in which the heroine dons male attire and becomes the confidante of her poor and bashful lover. *The Virginia Comedians*, often ranked as the author's best work, is another romantic tale of pre-Revolutionary times, full of intense devotion on the part of handsome cavaliers and of languishing on the part of the ladies. The plot is poorly organized, especially in the latter part; and an attempt to gain historic interest by introducing Patrick Henry is unsuccessful. Phlegmatic readers of the present day may doubt whether this artificial romantic society ever existed, but it is the society which tradition loves to paint as that of the old régime in the South, and which Cooke was especially fond of reproducing in his novels. He wrote several other stories in the same strain, though after the war, in which he served with distinction, he turned more to scenes from 1860 to 1865. Besides fiction he wrote a life of Stone-

wall Jackson and other biographical and semi-historical works. He was one of the most prolific writers of the Old South and many of his works are still in print. All are characterized by devotion to Virginia and by the air of the old-time romancer. Haste in composition and the inability to construct good plots account for the fact that his stories do not stand higher in their class.

Virginia was also the native state of Abram J. Ryan (1839-1886), whose wanderings in the service of his church afterward took him through nearly every Southern state. He entered the Roman Catholic priesthood and became a chaplain in the Confederate army. His poems stand to Roman Catholicism and devotion to the South as the more sentimental poems of the New England writers do to puritanism and loyalty to the Union, respectively. They have a swing that catches the popular ear and they are full of sincere emotion. Many are on distinctly religious subjects, many on the lost cause. The greatest favorites are "The Conquered Banner," and "The Sword of Lee," but several of the religious poems are really better. Mrs. Margaret Junkin Preston (1820-1897) was a native of Philadelphia, but lived most of her life at Lexington, Virginia, and became closely identified with the South. Her earliest publication was a novel, *Silverwood*, but she was more successful in her poetry, of which she produced several volumes. Her work shows some influence of Mrs. Browning, and is praised by her admirers for grace, delicacy of finish, purity of sentiment, and an intense religious element. Her poems are usually free from blemishes due to bad taste, and they show wide interests and some feeling; but they lack positive qualities which would entitle them to high rank. Her journals and letters give an interesting view of experiences during the war.

#### Minor Virginia Writers

It is difficult to identify Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

with any section of the country. By family relationship he was a Southerner, but he was born in Boston, received much of his schooling in England, and did his most effective literary work in Philadelphia and New York. He was not so much a cosmopolitan as a man independent of place and environment. If any section can lay claim to him it is the South, and if any state of the South, Virginia.

It is impossible to discuss Poe's position as a writer without some reference to the unfortunate controversies that arose regarding his life and character. When he died in 1849 he named as his literary executor the Reverend Rufus W. Griswold, whose labors as editor and compiler have already been mentioned. The relations between Poe and Griswold had been strained, and Poe had at one time expressed a bitter contempt for Griswold and all his works; but he apparently believed that there had been a complete reconciliation. A few days after Poe's death Griswold published in the New York "Tribune" an article the tone of which may be inferred from the statements that Poe "had few or no friends," and that "There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor." Griswold claimed, and it is charitable to believe, that when he wrote this article he was ignorant of the trust which Poe had imposed upon him. When, a little later, he undertook the preparation of a memoir to accompany Poe's works, he felt that he must adhere to his former statements, and he painted the author's character blacker, if possible, than before. When there was conflict between two authorities as to a fact, or two interpretations of an action, he uniformly chose the more unfavorable; and it is as certain as circumstantial evidence can make it that he falsified documents to support his case. This picture of depravity appealed

**Controversies  
Regarding Poe**



to people who since the days of Byron had been fond of associating genius with the diabolical, and in spite of protests by N. P. Willis and others who knew Poe it was long accepted as true. At length the reaction set in, and apologists went to ridiculous extremes in an attempt to prove Poe's character spotless. Even to-day the reader is sometimes troubled to decide just what he should believe.

It was not altogether Griswold's fault that hardly half the statements in his memoir are correct. Poe himself, whether through mere perversity, or for some other

#### Poe's Life

reason, gave currency to many wild tales regarding his life. The main facts are now, however, well established. He was born in Boston, where his parents were playing a temporary theatrical engagement. His father, who belonged to a respectable Southern family, had been disowned by his relatives when he went on the stage, and a year later had married an actress. Both parents died when Edgar was very young, and he was adopted by Mr. Allan, a merchant of Richmond, Virginia, who afterward acquired considerable wealth. From 1815 to 1820 the Allans were abroad, and Edgar was in a boys' school in the suburbs of London. He spent one year at the University of Virginia, where he made an excellent record for scholarship, but fell into the prevailing student dissipations. A quarrel with Mr. Allan over his gambling debts prevented his return to the University, and later led to his leaving home and to his disinheritance. He is said to have enlisted in the army, and to have served so faithfully that friends secured a discharge and an appointment to West Point. Here he neglected his military duties and was dismissed in 1831. Meanwhile he had published *Tamerlane and Other Poems, by a Bostonian*, in 1827; *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*, in 1829; and another volume of *Poems* in 1831. After many vicissitudes he attracted the attention of some literary men of Baltimore,

who secured him a position as editor of the "Southern Literary Messenger" at Richmond. In 1835 he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, a girl of thirteen. In 1837 he left Richmond and went first to New York and then to Philadelphia, where he was editor successively of "Burton's Gentleman's Magazine" and of "Graham's Magazine." In 1844 he went to New York, and became connected with the "Evening Mirror," and afterward was editor and part proprietor of the "Broadway Journal." After this failed he wrote for various periodicals. In 1847 his wife died. In 1849 he went South to further a project, which had been the dream of his life, for founding an independent literary magazine. While in Richmond he met Mrs. Sheldon, an old sweetheart, now a widow, and it is supposed that they became engaged. He started back to arrange his affairs in New York, but died in Baltimore. Most of his poems and prose tales were published in the magazines of which he was the editor. His longest tale, "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," the first part of which appeared in the "Southern Literary Messenger," was issued in book form in 1838. Collections of tales were published in 1839 and 1845, and a volume of poems in 1845.

It is harder to speak of Poe's character than of his life, not so much because the facts are unknown as because it is difficult to interpret them. Poe was addicted, **Poe's Character** probably from an early age, to the occasional use of intoxicants. His nervous temperament seems to have been such that a slight indulgence was productive of the worst results. He was not, at least during the greater part of his life, an habitual drunkard; but his weakness often prevented him from securing and holding regular employment. There is evidence that after the death of his wife he took to the use of drugs; and it is probable, though not certain, that his death in Baltimore was the result of a debauch.

In his relations with other men Poe was not a saint, but

he does not seem to have shown any serious moral obliquity. The worst stories told by Griswold have not been substantiated by later biographers, and his letters show nothing worse than some duplicity in criticising friends behind their backs. He exerted a strong influence over women, and in his later years had several intense "platonic friendships," at least one of which perhaps went a trifle beyond social conventionalities; yet there is no suspicion of moral wrongdoing. Indeed, both his writings and his life show a remarkable freedom from impure passion. His business relations have been the subject of detailed discussion, and even his failure to return a borrowed volume of no great value has been given a publicity that does not always attend delinquencies of this sort. In this case the discovery of a letter has proved him guiltless, not only of dishonesty, but of undue carelessness. There is no question, however, that he sometimes borrowed small sums of money that he was unable to repay; but there is nothing in these transactions to show deliberate dishonesty. Poe was, indeed, never mercenary, unless in his engagement to Mrs. Sheldon, and accounts of this affair are confused and uncertain. On the other hand the unselfishness of his devotion to his wife and her mother is shown by the testimony of all who knew the family, and by numerous letters written by Mrs. Clemm both before and after his death.

Poe's moral weaknesses were undoubtedly the chief cause of his failure in life, yet this does not mean that they were greater than those of many other men. Circumstances, which must be counted for something, were against him. His boyhood was passed in the expectation of a comfortable position in life, and the fact that it was his own vices which led Mr. Allan to cast him off did not fit him the better to make his own way. In literature he was in advance of his time. Editorial labors which, even though interrupted by his fits of intemperance,

**Poe's Faults and Misfortunes**

would now be worth great salaries, brought him but a few dollars a week. It is probable that his poems and prose tales now yield annually to many publishers who acknowledge no obligations of copyright sums larger than that which the author received from them during his entire life. Add to the lack of appreciation the fact that he had not the trick of making friends, and that he was too independent to worship the literary divinities of the day, and we have an explanation if not a palliation of much that was unfortunate in his life. Though a man of the finest nervous organization, he endured all his life the hardships of poverty. Worst of all, he was forced to see his invalid wife suffer, and perhaps die the sooner for want of the common comforts of existence. Had Poe been a model of thrift and propriety he could no doubt have eked out a comfortable existence on the money that he might have earned. But if his talents had brought him half the return with which they would have been rewarded a few years later, we should hear less about his moral faults.

So much has been said of Poe's life and character only because these subjects cannot be ignored in a consideration of his works. Though he revealed himself much less than has been supposed, the man and his works have always been inseparable in the popular mind. Critics, too, have been guilty of arguing in a circle, assuming that the writings were autobiographical because they dealt with sin and remorse, and then substantiating the popular conception of the author's character by reference to his writings.

Poe was a poet, a writer of prose tales, and a critic. His criticism, once dismissed lightly and held to be little more than the expression of bitter prejudices, is now more widely read, and serves as the best introduction to his other work. As a critic he belonged to the school of Coleridge, though his ideas were

#### **Poe and His Works**

#### **Literary Criticism**

mostly individual. He stood for literature as an art, and for the idea properly expressed by the much abused phrase, "Art for art's sake." The object of a work of pure literature should be, he felt, to make a definite pleasurable impression on the mind, and this impression should be made for itself, and not for any ulterior purpose of giving information or inculcating a moral. His most important ideas on the function of criticism in general are set forth in the letter prefixed to the *Poems* of 1831. His views of the poem are summarized in his popular lecture on "The Poetic Principle," and applied in his many reviews of poems by other authors. His theory of the prose story is best expressed in his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*.

It is sometimes said, uncharitably, that Poe so shaped his critical dicta as to give the highest place to the only kinds of literature that he could himself produce. This seems to be disproved by the fact that in "Al Aaraaf," published when he was but twenty, and itself written in a form which his criticisms disapprove, he sets forth in a mystical way the idea of beauty which underlies his later theory of poetry. As he developed this theory he defined poetry as "the rhythmical creation of beauty," and insisted that it should be treated as an art, not as the result of insane inspiration. The latter idea underlies "The Philosophy of Composition," an essay in which he professes to give, with absurd detail, his method in composing "The Raven." It is a corollary to his theory of the function of poetry that the lyric is a higher form than the epic; and, indeed, he went so far as to say that a long poem could not exist. His conception of the short prose tale is stated less definitely. He preferred it to the novel, because it allowed greater unity and definiteness of impression. He considered that though a lower form than the poem, it had possibilities which the poem had not, since it admitted impressions like terror and mystery, while poetry should be



limited to the presentation of beauty. In regard to other forms of literature, he laid down few general principles. A dramatic poem which was not an acting drama he was inclined to consider "a flat contradiction in terms."

In all his chief critical ideas Poe was in opposition to his most popular contemporaries. New England was dominant in American literature, and New England was represented by the intellectual didacticism of Peter Parley, and the moral didacticism of Longfellow. The idea of inspiration and the "divine afflatus" prevailed; and the public admired the poet who could write his poems at a sitting, rather than the one who perfected his work by years of polishing. Considering the individuality of his ideas, his reviews were usually fair in essentials. There are exceptions, such as his bitter attack on Griswold, and he had some prejudices that influenced much of his critical work. Toward female writers he was likely to be unduly charitable—he gave unstinted praise even to such sentimentalists as L. E. L. He had little friendly feeling for the New Englanders, partly because he differed so widely from their ideals, partly because it irked him to see them so popular while he was neglected, partly because he objected to their mutual admiration societies and log-rolling criticism. It was probably dislike of New England as much as love of the South that led him to pose occasionally as the representative of Southern ideas and institutions. Still, he always ranked Longfellow at the head of American poets, except when he wavered in favor of Lowell; and there is hardly a case in which he did not give a New England author as much praise as is conceded by posterity.

Poe's contemporary reputation as a bitter and unfair critic was due to the unpopularity of his critical standards, to his independence and lack of tact, and to the fact that he allowed himself to ride several hobbies. Chief among these were

**Poe and His  
Contemporaries**



grammar, versification, and originality. He rarely reviewed a prose work without quoting a list of expressions that were grammatically incorrect. Usually, it must be admitted, his points were well taken. **Critical Hobbies** The same cannot be said of his criticisms on versification. When he trusted his ear he was usually right, but he often preferred to base his criticisms on pedantic theories of technique. His favorite hobby was originality. He admitted no degrees of legitimate indebtedness, but characterized every case of similarity as plagiarism. Longfellow was the object of his most persistent and most unreasonable attacks on this charge. All these hobbies touched points on which writers are extremely sensitive; and an author's personal feeling toward the reviewer was influenced not by the pages of discriminating praise, but by the paragraph that exposed his grammatical blunders and bad rhymes, or passed harsh judgment on his borrowings.

Most of Poe's own writings conform strictly to his theories. The only exceptions in his verse are three long poems, published in early youth. "Tamerlane," which **Poe's Poems—  
Their Form** appeared when he was but eighteen, and which according to his own statement was written much earlier, shows plainly, though not obtrusively, the influence of Byron. Only an occasional favorite word like "bodiless" suggests the later verse. "Al Aaraaf," published two years later, was evidently written under the influence of Shelley. It is mystic and highly imaginative, and contains one lyric passage of rare and subtle beauty. It was originally prefaced by the sonnet, "To Science," which shows the author's youthful mastery of a form which he afterward rejected. The dramatic fragment, "Politian," is the least valuable of the three, and shows Poe out of his element. In these early years he was beginning to work out the wonderful music of his verse. His masters were Cole-

ridge, who may have suggested the use of the repetend, and Shelley, from whom he gained the trick of using a special vocabulary of onomatopoeic words. Later in life he took an occasional hint from Mrs. Browning, and perhaps from others. But what he borrowed he used in his own way, and he deserves the credit of originating a new effect in the music of English verse. The attainment of perfection was a matter of years. Many of the poems as we now have them were of exceedingly slow growth. Their successive stages of development may be seen in the versions published, often with change of title, in the periodicals of which the author was editor. His judgment on a freshly written poem was by no means sure. "The City in the Sea," "Ulalume," and others contained, as first published, stanzas that are almost ridiculously weak. But he rarely reprinted without making changes, and nearly every change is an improvement. Among poems that date from the earlier time with relatively few emendations are "Israfel" and "To Helen." "The Sleeper," which Poe considered his best poem, was changed almost out of semblance to its original form. The poems of his later years, such as "The Raven," "Ulalume," and "Annabel Lee," were of course subject to less revision. They exemplify, however, the artistic mastery of verse which he at last attained. "The Raven" probably owes as much of its popularity to mere effects of sound as to the thought and imagery. "Ulalume" shows the author's highest attainment in the production of unusual effects by the use of the repetend and onomatopoeic words.

The subjects of the poems also accord with the author's theories of the nature of poetry. His ideals limited him to the lyric, and in writing lyrics he aimed at the presentation of the highest beauty. In this, he tells us, there is always a touch of sadness; and the saddest of all thoughts are occasioned by

**Poe's Poems—  
Their Content**

the death of a beautiful woman. This theme is found in "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," "Ulalume," "To Helen," "To One in Paradise," "The Sleeper," and many more. In "Israel," "The Haunted Palace," "The City in the Sea," and others the element of sadness is present, but with different associations. Undoubtedly the range of ideas in the poem was limited by the author's conception of his art. War, happy love, and other usual themes of the lyric are wanting. The thought, too, is always subdued to a single emotional effect. It is not true, however, as is sometimes charged, that thought is absent, or trivial. Every poem except "The Bells," which is little more than a rhythmical exercise, has a definite and sufficient content, and can, if anyone desires, be paraphrased in prose. Even "Ulalume," which some critics have pronounced meaningless, should offer no difficulties of interpretation to any person who understands the vocabulary and takes up the poem with no preconceived idea of its autobiographical significance.

Poe's first published tale was "The MS. Found in a Bottle," which won a prize offered by the "Baltimore Saturday Visitor" in 1833. The others were published at intervals, most of them in the periodicals with which he was connected. Many of those that are included in his collected works are trash—the perfunctory output of a journalist who had to fill space. Poe himself is not responsible for the preservation of these pieces, and their mediocrity should not affect our judgment of his better work. His tales which are really excellent exceed in number those of any other American except Hawthorne. All these better stories, with the exception of the long "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," conform to the author's critical theory. This restricted him to a single definite effect or impression in each tale. The variety of effects, though much greater than in the poems, was limited. He handled humor

**Poe's Prose  
Tales**

with only moderate success, and no humorous tale deserves a place among his productions of first rank. He succeeded best in the representation of mystery, horror, and terror. This fact suggests comparisons with the English novelists of terror, with the German romanticists, and with Hawthorne. In no case is the resemblance very clear. He differed from Monk Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe in making prominent not so much the terrible as the effect of terror on the human mind. The resemblance to Hoffmann and the German romanticists is plainer, but the evidence of indebtedness is not clear. It seems reasonably certain that Poe did not read German, and the explanation that he knew Hoffmann through French and English translations is not convincing. Like Hawthorne, he delighted in psychological analysis, particularly the analysis of a morbid or terror-stricken mind. But he pictured the mind troubled by mental disease or physical suffering rather than by moral questionings.

The narrative method in the prose tales is that of a writer who wishes to make an emotional impression rather than to recount an action for its own sake. He succeeds admirably in creating and sustaining what it is now fashionable to call "atmosphere." To aid in doing this he often employs the device of a colorless, almost an impersonal, narrator, whose comments serve the purpose of a chorus, but who takes little important part in the action. This is the case in "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Descent into the Maelstrom," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and many more. Even when the narrator has a significant part in the story, as in "The Pit and the Pendulum" and "Ligeia," his personal traits are left vague and ill defined, and the reader thinks of him as passive rather than active. In the tales which have a more definite and everyday setting great care is taken to secure verisimilitude by the use of realistic details in both the narrative and

**Narrative  
Method**

the descriptive passages. This is shown to best advantage in the first part of "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," "The Gold-Bug," the detective tales, and some of the newspaper hoaxes. The descriptions are, indeed, sometimes too long and detailed to suit modern taste; and the same may be said of the expository passages in which, in a few tales, the author airs his philosophy. Usually, however, the tales are excellent in unity and proportion.

A careful student of the stories soon notices the frequent repetition of a few ideas. The thought of a partial sentience of the body after death, or at least of an indissoluble relation between the soul and the body, is common, as in the "Colloquy of Monos and Una" and in "Morella." With this may be connected the thought of premature burial, found in "The Fall of the House of Usher," and referred to in other tales. Reference to the walling up of a dead body is found in "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Black Cat," and in a slightly different form in "The Tell-Tale Heart." These and a few other ideas recur constantly.

This repetition of ideas makes any satisfactory classification of the tales difficult. There is great variety of subject and treatment, but tales that differ most widely in other respects are often associated through the recurrence of some favorite idea.

#### **Classification of Poe's Tales**

A few overlapping groups readily suggest themselves. The tales in which horror is painfully obtrusive, like "The Black Cat," "Berenice," and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," deserve little attention. They are powerful, and they develop some of Poe's favorite conceptions, but they indicate a partial lapse of taste, and it is the author's misfortune that they are so widely known. In "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Imp of the Perverse," and "The Cask of Amon-



tillado" the portrayal of horror is subsidiary to the study of its effects on the mind, and the story is more artistic. "The Masque of the Red Death" is still more unreal, and connects itself with the rhapsodies "Shadow" and "Silence," which are prose trenching on the domain of poetry. In "Ligeia" and to a slighter extent in "Morella" and "Eleonora" the author carries us out of all place and time, and deals with the very mysteries of existence.

It seems hard to believe that the same mind that conceived "Ligeia" planned also "The Gold-Bug," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter." The first of these is a story of the finding of buried treasure by means of a memorandum in cypher, and connects itself on the one hand with tales of adventure like the "Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," and on the other hand with the last three named. These three have the distinction of being the first detective stories, and in spite of countless imitations for more than sixty years they are still unexcelled. They represent a comparatively late period in Poe's literary work. While he was in Philadelphia he published a paper on methods of secret writing, and for a time amused himself by reading all cyphers sent him. It was about the same time that he began to write his tales of ratiocination. The scenes of these three stories are laid in Paris, and all have the same hero, M. Dupin. The thesis of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is that the more mysterious the aspect of a crime, the more readily should the facts be discovered by an acute reasoner. "The Purloined Letter" presents the converse of this proposition, that the simplest things are the most puzzling to ordinary minds. In "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" the author dealt with a crime that had been a short time before the sensation of New York. He gave a French form to the name of the victim, Mary Rogers, ex-

**Poe's Stories of  
Ratiocination**



changed Paris for New York and the Seine for the Hudson, and endeavored to have M. Dupin settle, from information furnished by the newspapers, the responsibility for a crime which had baffled the police. His reasoning is plausible, and it is said that later revelations showed the truth of his theory; but the necessity of adhering to fact, and of sifting much irrelevant testimony to show its worthlessness spoils the proportion of the story.

This union of the intellectual, the ratiocinative faculty with the highly imaginative is the most distinctive characteristic of Poe's genius. It was his own theory that a mathematician could not reason well unless he were something of a poet. Certainly his imaginative faculty helped in the production of his intellectual tales; and his intellectuality doubtless aided as much in the creation of his poetry and his imaginative stories. The two together gave him an insight that accomplished what he could have done with neither alone. This was strikingly illustrated by his prediction, from the first few chapters, of the outcome of "Barnaby Rudge." It is shown, also, in his article on the automatic chess player, and in many of his critical works. In some of his essays he called to his aid both intellect and imagination in forming conjectures of the things that lie beyond human knowledge. The prose rhapsodies, the mystical tales like "Ligeia," and the late "prose poem" "Eureka" all show how persistently he thought on the great mysteries of existence. It was probably this habit of questioning the unknowable that led him to the production of those tales that are too uncanny and weird. It is a mistake to suppose that these are only theatrical attempts at effect, or that they have no relation to life. Poe was forever thinking about life, and about its deepest problems. Like any journalist, he sometimes wrote under compulsion, and to meet the popular demand. He lacked

**Poe's Genius  
Two-Sided**

thorough scholarly training, though he was widely read, and he sometimes attempted to conceal his limitations by tricks like those which he exposed in "How to Write a Blackwood Article." But when he was at his best he was not a charlatan, but a conscious artist, using the tricks of his art only to secure the greater fidelity to truth.

Poe's genius was recognized to some extent before his death, but full appreciation of his worth has been a matter of slow growth. It is the misfortune of such a writer **Poe's Rank** that his more obvious and less subtle work attracts most attention. "The Raven" is still the most popular of his poems, and "The Black Cat" is at least as well known as any of his tales. It was also his misfortune to be worshipped by a cult, against the extravagant claims of which saner readers felt bound to protest. He has, however, won the praise of the most conservative critics, and many later writers have done him the honor of imitation. Swinburne, Rossetti, and even Tennyson were influenced by his verse; Stevenson's "Treasure Island" shows obvious similarity to "The Gold-Bug"; Jules Verne took the hint for some of his extravagant sketches from the newspaper hoaxes; de Maupassant and a host of short story writers in France, England, and America have acknowledged him as master; and the innumerable writers of detective stories have modeled their work on "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter." The fact that his works have given suggestions to such widely different writers is a sufficient answer to the remark sometimes made that Poe's range is narrow. It is a just criticism that his range, though broad, did not include the more common forms and themes—the narrative poem, the love lyric, the love tale, and the presentation of commonplace truth in prose and verse. These are the stuff of which most literature is made, and the writer who lacks them has a restricted audience, and a somewhat weaker hold

on all readers who have strong human sympathies; yet there is much else in literature. With all his limitations Poe has attained a foreign reputation that is probably more secure than that of any other American author, and for the last fifty years has been steadily gaining in recognition at home.

South of Virginia the only important literary center was Charleston. Here were established from time to time a

Charleston—  
William Gilmore  
Simms

number of short-lived magazines, and here were found several writers of national reputation. The most important of these was William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870). He was

a native of Charleston. When he was a mere child his mother died, and his father failed in business and went West, leaving him in the charge of his grandmother. After a brief and unsatisfactory schooling he became a drug clerk as a preliminary to the study of medicine. By the time he was eighteen, however, he abandoned this occupation for the study of law. After a visit to his father in Mississippi, where he saw something of frontier life, he practiced his profession in Charleston for a year, and then turned to literature. Between 1827 and 1832 he was editor of a magazine and of a newspaper which successively failed, wrote tales and miscellaneous articles for the magazines, and published five volumes of verse. The last of these was his most ambitious poetical attempt, *Atalantis*. He went to New York to see it through the press, and began life-long friendships with Bryant and several other northern men of letters. In 1833 he brought out his first romance, *Martin Faber*, and a collection of short tales. The former is said to have been a harrowing story of crime, based partly on fact. The author afterward excluded it from his collected works. *Guy Rivers*, a story of wild life on the frontier, was issued in 1834, and *The Yemassee*, the first of his historical tales, in 1835.

From this time on Simms's literary activities were too

numerous to mention in detail. He worked indefatigably and with wonderful rapidity. Before the outbreak of the Civil War he had been associated editorially with half a dozen periodicals, and had published a dozen or more volumes of verse, two dozen volumes of fiction, two dramas, and many miscellaneous works, besides a good share of the two hundred and fifty magazine articles which his biographer was able to identify. Meanwhile his first wife had died, and he had married a lady of some fortune, and lived on her father's plantation near Charleston. He made frequent visits to New York, where most of his books were published, and during part of the year he lived in Charleston. Here, in the fifties, he became the center of a group of literary men, most of them younger than himself, which included the poets Timrod and Hayne. Although after his second marriage he was in somewhat easier circumstances financially, his life was not wholly pleasant. Charleston society, the most exclusive in the South, gave little recognition to the former drug clerk. His health began to fail; he suffered affliction in the illness and death of several of his children; his home was partly destroyed by fire; and he worried greatly over the political troubles that were agitating his state. Long before the outbreak of the war he had become a strong secessionist, and a believer in the beneficence of slavery. He advocated extreme measures, and when the culmination came took great interest in the attack on Sumter, and made suggestions for fortifications, some of which were adopted. Throughout the war he continued to write, but as his connection with Northern publishing houses was broken off he printed only in Southern periodicals. The close of the struggle left him in poverty and broken in health. His wife had died during the war. His library and the rest of the buildings on his estate had been burned. He could support himself only by incessant writing. The kind of fic-

**Simms's  
Later Years**

tion which he produced was going out of fashion and he was forced to contribute stories to cheap Northern periodicals, or to send his work to ambitious Southern magazines which were unable to pay. Soon after the war he renewed his friendship with many of the Northerners whom he had known, and some of them were able to make life easier for him without wounding his pride.

As has been seen, Simms tried most forms of writing in prose and verse. He began with verse, and it is said that he always esteemed his poems more highly than his prose. His readers disagreed with him, however, and this fact, though it disappointed him, led him to give more of his time to fiction. Most of his poetry was written before 1850. His earliest verses show considerable influence of Byron and Wordsworth. His longest poem, *Atalantis; a Story of the Sea*, was evidently written after reading *Comus*. The persons of the poem include the King of the Sea-Demons, a Princess of the Nereids, a Zephyr-Spirit, and several flesh and blood Spaniards. The poem opens with the princess enchanted upon a magical island raised by the King of the Sea-Demons, but, like Milton's heroine, resolute in mind. The plot is resolved when one of the Spaniards, sole survivor of a shipwreck, becomes her lover and rescues her magic wand. Interspersed throughout the blank verse dialogue are some of the author's most melodious or most nearly melodious lyrics. The other poems show considerable variety, but none of them is of great importance.

Simms's best work is his fiction. Even this varies greatly in kind and quality. Some of the least known romances are psychological studies influenced by Godwin. *Pelayo* and *Count Julian* are based on romantic incidents in Spanish history, and *The Damsel of Darien* on the adventures of Balboa. The short stories were also in a variety of manners and on a vg-

Prose  
Fiction



riety of subjects. The two important groups of his romances are those that deal with frontier life, and those that are based on events in the colonial and revolutionary history of the South. In these he was trying to do for his section of the country what Cooper had done for the North. The border romances are tales of outlawry and crime, exciting, but with little artistic merit. The chief are *Guy Rivers*, *Richard Hardis*, *Border Beagles*, *Beauchamp*, and *Charlemont*. The scenes of the first four are laid in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky respectively. More important, on the whole, are the colonial and revolutionary tales. These include *The Yemassee*, *The Partisan*, *Mellichampe*, *The Kinsman* (renamed *The Scout*), *Katherine Walton*, *The Sword and the Distaff* (renamed *Woodcraft*), *The Forayers*, *Eutaw*, and others, some of them published only in magazines. The first of the series, *The Yemassee*, is usually conceded to be the best. The scene is in South Carolina during the colonial time, and the story is one of Indian warfare, with the usual love incidents. The characters, especially the Indians, are well portrayed, the descriptions of natural scenery are true and sympathetic, and the fights are exciting. Though the reader is many times reminded of *The Spy* and *The Last of the Mohicans* the book is far more than an imitation.

Simms's two dramas, "Norman Maurice" and "Michael Bonham," and his "dramatic essay," "Benedict Arnold," are far more crude than either his poems or his romances; at least their form makes their crudities more noticeable. The blank verse tragedy, "Norman Maurice," in which the hero, a lawyer and politician, triumphs over all sorts of diabolical enemies and becomes United States Senator from Missouri, reads in parts like a burlesque on a melodrama, and it is hard to realize that it is serious work, written when the

#### Miscellaneous Work



author was in his prime. His miscellaneous works include popular biographies of Marion, Captain John Smith, the Chevalier Bayard, and Nathanael Greene, and treatises on the history and geography of South Carolina. He also edited several apocryphal Shakespeare plays, and in 1867 a volume of *War Poetry of the South*.

Temperament, lack of critical training, financial necessities, and indeed all circumstances conspired to make Simms a hasty and careless writer. He had all the literary faults of his Northern prototype, Cooper, and much less of genius. Still, he deserves a place among American writers of romance, not merely as the leading representative of his class in the South, but as the author of several works that show more than a fair mastery of the difficult art of planning an exciting narrative.

**Simms's  
Importance**

Among the younger men of letters who gathered about Simms were Henry Timrod and Paul Hamilton Hayne.

Both were natives of Charleston of nearly the same age, and though they differed widely in social position they were friends from boyhood. Timrod (1829-1867) was of German ancestry, the son of a bookbinder who sometimes made verses, and who achieved a little military distinction in the Seminole War. The death of the father left the family poor, and Henry was unable to complete his course at the University of Georgia. He studied law, but never practiced, and for some time served as tutor in a private family. At the opening of the Civil War he enlisted, but was obliged to leave the service on account of ill health. He made an unsuccessful attempt to act as war correspondent, and edited a paper at Columbia, South Carolina. When this city was burned he lost all his property. From this time until his death in 1867 his life was one of privation and suffering. He was already afflicted with con-

**Henry Timrod**

sumption, and he seems to have been of an impractical turn of mind, and unable to make the best of circumstances.

Timrod's first volume of verse was published in Boston in 1860, and was praised as a work of promise. In 1873 his friend Hayne collected his works and published them with a memoir. The poems by which he is best remembered were written during and after the war. Several of them are of the emotional sort which consists in praise of his state and objurgation of her enemies. They have fire and lyric swing; but a comparison of his "Carolina" and Whittier's "Massachusetts to Virginia," poems with about the same proportion of intellectual and emotional elements, will show the lack of weight behind the Southern fierceness. "The Cotton Boll," one of his best poems, has fine melodious passages, but seems less successful if it is read as a whole. Some of his personal poems and poems of nature show an ear for verse harmonies and a lyric gift. The bulk of his excellent work is, however, small.

Paul Hamilton Hayne (1830-1886) came of an old South Carolina family. He was educated at the College of South Carolina in his native city, and then studied law; but he soon abandoned his profession for letters. He was connected editorially with Charleston periodicals. Like Timrod, he served in the war until his health failed; and like him, he lost his library and his home by fire. He was left almost penniless, and removed to a few acres of land in the pine barrens near Augusta, Georgia. Here he remained until his death, supporting himself mainly by writing. He published volumes of poems in 1855, 1857, 1859, 1872, and 1875, and a collected edition in 1882. In prose he wrote the lives of his uncle, Robert Young Hayne, and of Hugh S. Lagaré, and many magazine articles. At the time of his death he left a romance unfinished. As a

poet Hayne was influenced by the more musical English masters—by Chaucer and Tennyson, and to some extent by Poe. The bulk of his verse is considerable, and much of it gives the impression of having been written too easily. When he took pains and was at his best he attained to charming musical effects. Almost all his poems are short. During the war he wrote patriotic lyrics that were intense, but not so bitter as those of his friend Timrod. In later years he became reconciled, in a manly and honorable way, to the new order, and while he never lost his devotion to the South, he wrote many poems that tended to a better understanding between the sections of the country. His writings, like his life, show the sweetness of his temper, his bravery in adversity, and his loyalty to his principles and his friends. In feeling for the subtle tones of verse he was inferior to Timrod, and he has received less praise; but it is doubtful if he was not as true a poet, and a better representative of what was best in the South.

It is only by the fact of residence and choice of subjects that Albion W. Tourgee (1838-1905) is classed with Southern writers. He was born in Ohio, attended Rochester University, and served in the Union army during the Civil War. In 1865 he settled in North Carolina, where he held various offices, and as judge of the superior court was concerned in breaking up the secret political organization known as the Ku-Klux-Klan. After 1881 he lived in Pennsylvania and New York, and held appointments in the United States consular service. His first novel, *Toinette*, a study of social conditions at the South, made little stir; but *Figs and Thistles*, *A Fool's Errand*, and *Bricks Without Straw*, all published in 1879-80, and all dealing with Southern social and political conditions, were widely read. Later works touching on the same theme, among them *Hot Plowshares*, and *An Appeal to*

#### Minor Southern Writers

*Cæsar*, were less successful. His best work, *A Fool's Errand*, is based in part on his own experiences, and contains incidents said to have been revealed in the investigation of the Ku-Klux-Klan. It is the obviously partisan work of a man who wished to be fair, but who could not overcome his prejudices. Some of the situations are strong and are told with considerable power. Unlike *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with which, in the days of its popularity, it was sometimes compared, it lacked the art and the insight necessary to give it permanence. Dr. Frank O. Ticknor (1822-1874), a physician and farmer of Columbus, Georgia, is remembered as the author of a number of smooth lyrics, with a faint touch of archaic simplicity, and some restraint. His best known poem, "Little Giffin of Tennessee," is said to be based on fact. Most of his best pieces were written during the war, but they deal with home, friends, nature, and love of children, rather than with military achievements. They were not published in book form until 1879.

With the Southwestern states were associated several writers of Northern birth who became Southerners both by residence and by sympathies. William Wilberforce Lord (1819-1907), a native of New

**Minor Writers of  
the Southwest**

York, was many years rector of an Episcopalian church at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and during the war was chaplain in the Confederate army. He published a volume of *Poems*, *Christ in Hades*, and *Andre*, a tragedy. His work is imitative, especially of Wordsworth. Albert Pike (1809-1891) was born in Boston, attended Harvard college, and taught for a time in New England. In 1831 he went to the far Southwest, and after various adventures returned to Arkansas, where he became an editor and a lawyer. He served in the Mexican War and in the Confederate army. After the close of the Civil War he removed to Memphis and then to Washington. His twelve "Hymns to

the Gods," eight of which were published in Blackwoods' Magazine" in 1839, were written while he was still a school teacher in New England. They are rhetorical apostrophes to the heathen deities, and show the influence of Coleridge and Keats, but are well sustained, and give promise of better things. The author's removal from literary associations and his interest in other activities probably account for his failure to fulfill this promise. His *Prose Sketches and Poems*, written in the Southwest, in the preface of which he says, "It is some time since I have seen the works of any poet," are naturally more interesting for subject matter than for artistic excellence. He is best remembered as the author of "Dixie" and a few other short poems, among them an "Ode to the Mocking-Bird," modelled to some extent on Keats's "Ode to the Nightingale." Mary Ashley Townsend (1832-1901), born in New York, and after her marriage a resident of New Orleans, wrote under the pen name of Xariffa. Her humorous sketches in prose are forgotten, but her mildly sentimental poems hold for her a place in the anthologies.

### VIII. WESTERN WRITERS

In the early years of the period under discussion, before railroads had bound together the East and the West, the Ohio valley continued to maintain a fairly definite group or school of writers. Like Flint, Hall, and other pioneers who were noticed in the preceding chapter, these men were most of them born in the East, but entered enthusiastically into the spirit of the West. They wrote on Western subjects, edited and contributed to Western periodicals, and often had their books printed by Western publishers.

George D. Prentice (1802-1870) was a precocious Connecticut boy who was graduated from Brown and became an editor at Hartford. In 1830 he left his paper in charge of

#### **A Group of Western Writers**

a promising young contributor, John Greenleaf Whittier, and went to Kentucky to gather material for a life of his political idol, Henry Clay. He was induced to remain, and continued until his death as editor of the "Louisville Journal," afterward the "Courier-Journal." He was a clever newspaper writer in a day when personalities and smart repartee were more the fashion than now. A collection of his best paragraphs was published in 1859 under the title *Prenticeana*. These are mostly quick, humorous thrusts at opponents and their ideas, and are not always characterized by delicacy. Of more importance were the author's poems, published at intervals during his life, and collected into a volume after his death. He was strongly influenced by Bryant, and some of his most popular pieces, such as "The Closing Year," are almost imitations in both idea and versification. He also wrote poems of lighter sentiment with the trite diction and imagery so common in his day. Some of these are faintly suggestive of Moore.

William D. Gallagher (1808-1894) was born in Philadelphia, but removed to Ohio at the age of ten. He edited several newspapers and short-lived magazines in Cincinnati and other Ohio cities, and afterward in Louisville. His interest in Western literature was always strong. Besides encouraging the writers of his section in the journals that he edited, he compiled in 1841 *Selections from the Poetical Literature of the West*. He wrote many poems, of which the most ambitious was "Miami Woods." This contains sympathetic nature descriptions, and moralizings, mostly commonplace, on subjects suggested by the forest. The rather halting blank verse is at times reminiscent of Bryant, and perhaps of Byron and Cowper, and is interspersed with stanzas in unrhymed metres. Gallagher's miscellaneous poems are on various themes; some



preach the democratic idea of the dignity of labor, and others, on the whole his best, picture various aspects of nature as seen in the West.

Among the literary protégés of Prentice was Amelia B. Welby (1819-1852), born Coppuck, a native of Maryland who removed to Kentucky in childhood. She wrote over the signature of "Amelia" passionate sentimental verses which went through many editions, and won for her a share of the praise which Poe was fond of distributing among poetesses. A writer of a very different sort, and one not so closely connected with the Kentucky-Cincinnati school, was Robert Dale Owen (1801-1877). He was the son of the noted Scotch reformer Robert Owen, and came to the United States in 1825 to aid in the establishment of a communistic colony at New Harmony, Indiana. After this failed he served in congress from Indiana, and held other political offices. Though somewhat erratic in his ideas he was a forceful writer on social and educational questions, and in his later years published several works on spiritualism. He also attempted a drama on the subject of Pocahontas, and in 1874 published *Threading my Way*, an interesting though rambling autobiography covering his life until he settled in America. Among native Western writers was Henry M. Brackenridge (1786-1871), son of H. H. Brackenridge, the versatile author of *Modern Chivalry*. He was born in Pittsburgh and spent a considerable portion of his life in that city. As early as 1812 he published an account of Louisiana, and followed this by other miscellaneous historical and descriptive writing. His more important works are *Recollections of Persons and Places in the West*, 1834, and a *History of the Western Insurrection*, written to vindicate his father. His prose is pleasant and readable, without his father's erratic humor.

To the West of this time also belongs Abraham Lincoln

(1809-1865), whose qualities as a statesman have tended to distract attention from his ability as a writer and a speaker.

**Abraham  
Lincoln**

In simplicity, candor, and pleasing directness of expression his prose has probably been equalled by that of no other American publicist except Franklin; and he far excels Franklin when he mixes an emotional element with the intellectual. Even when he is slightly rhetorical, as in the "Second Inaugural Address," and to a lesser extent in the "Gettysburg Address," he seems perfectly genuine. In acquiring this prose style Lincoln probably owed fully as much to the frankness and vigor of pioneer life in Kentucky and Illinois as to the frequently mentioned study of Shakespeare and the Bible.

In the later years of the period the writers of the middle West were less closely associated. After railroads were

**Later Minor  
Writers**

opened they were more likely to publish their books and to form their literary friendships in the East. As the region to which they belonged became less isolated their writings lost many of the distinctively Western characteristics. Moncure D. Conway (1832-1907) was active in the anti-slavery agitation in Ohio, and wrote on a variety of subjects while pastor of a Unitarian church in Cincinnati. He was born of a slaveholding family in Virginia, studied law, entered the Methodist ministry, became a Unitarian, attended Harvard divinity school, and preached as a Unitarian in Washington, Cincinnati, and London, England. He wrote on many things and was the friend of many distinguished men of letters in England and America. He cannot be associated definitely with any section of the country, but his career as an author virtually began in Cincinnati. J. J. Piatt (1835- ) has continued, in poetry, some of the traditions of the Ohio valley school. In Michigan Will Carleton (1845- ) has written simple ballads of domestic life. These men are still living.

Edward Eggleston (1837-1902) was born in Indiana of Virginia ancestry. He attended school but two years and was mainly self-educated. He served as a Methodist preacher and agent of a Bible society in Indiana and Minnesota, and afterward edited juvenile papers in Illinois. In 1870 he removed to New York. His first novel, *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, was published in 1871. This was followed by several others, the most important being *The Circuit Rider*, *Roxy*, *The Hoosier Schoolboy*, *The Graysons*, and *The Faith Doctor*; and by some collections of short stories. In his later years Eggleston gave much attention to the history of the United States and wrote several popular historical works. He had a high ideal of the duties and the importance of the novelist, and in his stories of Western life he endeavored to paint accurately the scenes and the types of character which he knew in his boyhood. This painful sense of duty was fatal to artistic excellence. His attempt to show both the good and the bad sides of pioneer life and pioneer character interfered with the romantic effect of his stories, and yet did not assure realism. Nevertheless, the intrinsic interest of the life described and the author's moral earnestness secured great popularity for *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, *The Circuit Rider*, and their successors; and they are still valuable for the glimpses they give of pioneer times.

Another Indiana novelist, Lewis, or Lew Wallace (1827-1905), was a lawyer, who also served with distinction in both the Mexican and the Civil Wars. His career as a writer began late in life. *The Fair God*, 1873, a story of the conquest of Mexico, is full of vivid descriptions, highly colored after Prescott, and shows considerable archæological research. Both this and Wallace's most successful novel, *Ben-Hur, a Tale of the Christ*, 1880, are somewhat crude and melodramatic, but show a remarkable

power of realizing and picturing the details of unfamiliar scenes. His later works were *The Boyhood of Christ*, *The Prince of India*, a novel, *The Wooing of Malkatoon*, a long poem in prosaic blank verse, and *Commodus*, a blank verse drama. These have all the faults of *Ben-Hur* and fewer excellences.

John Hay (1838-1905) was born in Indiana, was graduated from Brown University, and studied and practiced law in Illinois until 1861. He was private secretary to President Lincoln, and held diplomatic positions abroad until 1870. For a time he was editorial writer on the "New York Tribune." After 1875 his residence was in Ohio, but he was much of the time in the public service. Under President McKinley he was ambassador to England, and later secretary of state. The *Pike County Ballads* were published while he was engaged on the "Tribune," as was *Castilian Days*, the result of studies of Spanish life made while he was attached to the legation at Madrid. *The Breadwinners*, an anonymous novel of which he is generally conceded to be the author, appeared in 1883. In 1890 were published another volume of poems and the monumental work of Nicolay and Hay on Lincoln's administration. The *Pike County Ballads* present the rough language and crude but intense ideas usually associated with the West. Some of the "Ballads" were wholly humorous, but the most popular, "Jim Bludsoe" and "Little Breeches," combine humor and pathos. Hay was not a great writer, but both his verse and his prose show that in addition to his capabilities for statesmanship and diplomacy he had the instincts of a man of letters.

Another Western verse writer, whose work, if not his name, is most widely known of all, was Stephen C. Foster (1826-1864). He was born in Pittsburg and spent most of his life in that city and in Cincinnati. He was always devoted to

music, and finally relinquished business to become an author and composer of songs. He wrote "Old Black Joe," "Old Folks at Home," "Nellie was a Lady," "Old Kentucky Home," and many more songs in negro dialect, and also sentimental pieces, among them "Come where my Love Lies Dreaming." Though none of these belongs to the higher order of poetical or musical composition, they are free from the cheapness and vulgarity of many of their class, and the popularity of some of them, notably "Old Folks at Home," has been almost universal.

**Stephen C.  
Foster**

A geographical classification of authors makes no place for a wanderer like Richard Realf (1834-1878), but he was associated with the West, and his longest residence in one place, five years, was at Pittsburg. He was born in England, where his precocity secured the patronage of Lady Byron and others. At eighteen he published a volume of poems entitled *Guesses at the Beautiful*. An intrigue with a woman older and of higher social rank than himself ruined his prospects and led him to come to America in 1854. He worked in the Five Points mission in New York, then went to Kansas, where he became associated with John Brown. Subsequently he visited England, lived for a time in the South, did newspaper work in Ohio, served in the Union army during the war, afterward in the regular army, and was editor of a Pittsburg paper. In the end he committed suicide in California. At various times he was a proselyte to the Roman Catholic church and student in a Jesuit college, lecturer for the Shakers, and applicant for admission to the Oneida community. He seems to have married three women, all of whom were living, undivorced, at the time of his death. There was probably a touch of insanity in his nature which accounted for his vagrant and non-moral career. In one of three sonnets

**Richard Realf**



written on the night of his death he spoke of himself as "a great soul killed by cruel wrong," but he rarely mentioned or even commented indirectly upon his own life. On the other hand many of his poems on love and friendship are strong and apparently genuine. His work shows a combination of idealism and sensuousness that suggests the Pre-Raphaelites. His poems were published in the "Atlantic," "Scribner's," and other periodicals, and have been collected since his death. A few of them, such as "Indirection" and "An Old Man's Idyl," entitle him to a definite place among minor American poets.

Among orators of the middle West may be mentioned Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899). He was born in New York, but spent almost his entire life in Illinois. His best speeches were pleas in important cases in which he was counsel, and occasional orations, notably his nomination of Blaine in the presidential convention of 1876. He attracted most attention, however, by his lectures attacking the conventional aspects of Christianity. All his speeches show a tendency to be flamboyant and over-rhetorical, and in those on religious questions he makes use of ridicule and irritating satire. He had an effective command of language, but his works will always be more highly admired by the sophomore than by the maturer mind.

The West has produced more than its fair proportion of popular humorists. Most of these have little literary merit, though they cannot quite be ignored. There is a distinctly Western quality in the work of Henry W. Shaw (1818-1885) which can be traced to an experience of twenty years as steamboat hand, auctioneer, and Ohio farmer, though he did not become famous as "Josh Billings" until after his return to the East. He owed his popularity to short sayings, which usually ex-

**Robert G.  
Ingersoll**

**Lesser Western  
Humorists**



pressed commonplace moral truths in an odd way, and were made more striking by the cheap device of bad spelling. When he attempted a connected discourse he was insufferably flat. David Ross Locke (1833-1888), a native of New York but long an Ohio newspaper man, wrote the "Petroleum V. Nasby" letters, which were among the most popular political satires during the war and reconstruction periods. Most of these were published in the "Toledo Blade" and afterward collected in several volumes. They purport to be written from Kentucky by an illiterate and morally irresponsible Democrat. During the exciting years in which they appeared they were widely read, and they are said to have been greatly enjoyed by President Lincoln. To the reader of to-day they seem to be characterized by flatness, vulgarity, and an exaggeration too great to be funny. A novel entitled *A Paper City*, and a book of travels, *Nasby in Exile*, are worthless. Edgar W. Nye (1850-1896), who grew to manhood in Wisconsin, and for a time edited a paper in Wyoming, wrote sketches over the name "Bill Nye," already made famous by Bret Harte. He probably had more genius, and certainly more refinement, than either Shaw or Locke, but he had less didactic purpose, and his fame is likely to be even shorter lived than theirs.

An incomparably greater humorist was Samuel L. Clemens (1835-1910), who seems destined to be remembered by his

**Mark Twain** pen name, Mark Twain. He was born at Florida, Missouri, where his father, a Virginian of good family, had gone after an unsuccessful career as lawyer and business man in Kentucky and Tennessee. Most of his boyhood was spent in the sleepy slave-holding river town of Hannibal, Missouri. His environment and many of his adventures are pictured in *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. When he was twelve years of age his father died and he was apprenticed to a local printer. Later he went

East for a year, worked at his trade in New York and Philadelphia, and visited Washington. At the age of twenty-one he started to "learn the river," and in less than two years was a licensed steamboat pilot on the lower Mississippi. The incidents in the first part of *Life on the Mississippi* are largely autobiographical, though in the book he represents himself as somewhat younger than was actually the case. Up to this time he had written nothing of importance. Tradition tells of a sensational issue of his brother's newspaper which he produced when left in charge, and of some unidentified contributions to the "Saturday Evening Post." While on the river he contributed to a New Orleans paper a burlesque on the reminiscent and oracular utterances which Captain Sellers, an old pilot, was in the habit of publishing over the signature "Mark Twain." Captain Sellers is said to have been so offended that he never wrote again. At a later date Clemens had occasion to make use of both his real and his pen name.

At the outbreak of the war the young pilot found his occupation gone, and after a brief and unimportant experience in the Confederate army he went West with his brother, who had been appointed secretary to the territorial governor of Nevada. He saw various aspects of life in the West, tried mining, took up a timber claim on the shores of Lake Tahoe, and did editorial work on a paper at Virginia City, Nevada, and later on the "San Francisco Morning Call." In San Francisco he came in contact with Bret Harte and others of the interesting group who were trying to develop literature on the Pacific slope. For a few months he was in the Sandwich islands as a newspaper correspondent, and he lectured a little. He had already established a local reputation as a humorist, but he attracted slight attention until 1867, when *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras* was published in a New York

**Mark Twain's  
Later Career**

paper. Two years later he was sent by a newspaper on a cruise to Southern Europe and the Holy Land—the first, apparently, of the Mediterranean tours by chartered steamer which are now so common. His newspaper correspondence written on this trip was worked over into *The Innocents Abroad*, which appeared in book form in 1869. This was printed for the subscription trade, rather showily, with crude if sometimes vigorous woodcuts. It achieved a large sale, though chiefly among readers who bought literature on the solicitations of agents. On his return from his first trip abroad he became editor of a paper in Buffalo, New York, and in 1871 removed to Hartford, Connecticut. After this time he lived in Connecticut and New York, with several visits abroad. Shortly before his death Oxford conferred on him the degree of D. C. L. Like Scott he was heavily involved in the failure of a firm that published his own and other books, but he lived to pay all debts and to spend his last years in comfortable circumstances.

Mark Twain passed the greater part of his literary life in the East, but he was distinctly a product of the West.

**Mark Twain  
and the West** The unprogressive existence in the Missouri community where he spent his boyhood, and the free, varied life on the Mississippi influenced him profoundly in different ways, and his later experiences on the Pacific slope gave just the element that was needed to produce a man who was typical of the most picturesque parts of the West. It is not quite certain when he changed his views on slavery and kindred matters. He was of Virginia ancestry, his own family held slaves, and at the outbreak of the war he evidently inclined toward the South. Through all his later writings he was unsparing in his condemnation of slavery, both because it was a moral wrong and because it repressed the economic and industrial advancement in which he so thoroughly believed. Mr. Howells says,

"The part of him that was Western in his Southwestern origin Clemens kept to the end, but he was the most de-southernized Southerner I ever knew."

Like many humorists Mark Twain showed eccentric and contradictory personal traits. Some of these were no doubt inborn and others were acquired during the varied experiences of his early years. The slow drawl which many persons thought was affected for use on the lecture platform is said to have been characteristic of his mother's speech as well. His unrepressed indulgence in profanity and his habit of using broad language in conversation and personal letters may have been acquired on the river. He had a fondness for striking costumes, such as the sealskin coat which caused discomfort to his friends as they walked with him on Broadway, and the white serge suit which he wore conspicuously in his later years; and he was fond of doing things to surprise and shock the conservative public. He was enthusiastic over the practical achievements of modern scientists and inventors, though, if we are to believe his own statement, he lacked the mechanical sense necessary to comprehend even the simplest device. A more important characteristic was his liability to form intense dislikes for persons and institutions. In both his humorous and his serious works he occasionally pauses to deliver a fling of concentrated bitterness at something which has aroused his hatred. In *Innocents Abroad* he denounces Abelard. In *Tom Sawyer* he condemns the sentimentality which shows sympathy for criminals. Among his pet literary aversions was Sir Walter Scott, and with a total disregard of chronology he seriously held Scott's romances responsible for the false ideals of chivalry and the backward condition of the South.

Mark Twain was the author of many works, not all of which need be mentioned here. After *The Innocents Abroad*

he wrote *Roughing It* (1872), which tells of his early experiences in Nevada and California. His sketches of travel

**Mark Twain's  
Writings**

were continued, at a later date, by *A Tramp Abroad* and *Following the Equator*. In 1873 he wrote, in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age*. The chief character of this story is Colonel Sellers, the delightfully enthusiastic and impecunious promoter of great business ventures. Colonel Sellers is said to have been drawn from the life after a cousin of Clemens's mother, and the fact that the caricature was sympathetic doubtless adds to his charm. A dramatized version of the book, centering around the character of Sellers, held the stage for some years. In 1876 appeared *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and in 1884 the companion volume, *Huckleberry Finn*. *The Prince and the Pauper*, which was also dramatized, was published in 1882, and *Life on the Mississippi* in 1883. Among other noteworthy works were *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, 1889, in which the author keeps up his quarrel with feudal ideals, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 1894, another tale of a Mississippi River town, *Joan of Arc*, an historical novel, and *Christian Science*, an attack on the new faith.

Mark Twain made his first reputation as a humorist. There is much that is not funny in *The Innocents Abroad*, but the

**Mark Twain's  
Humor**

great majority of readers who bought the inartistic volume from a persuasive agent thought of it only as a funny book and the author as another American "funny man." In essence the humor is of the same sort that had been shown by other newspaper writers. There is much exaggeration, some of it less effective than statement of fact would have been. The tourist who had a napoleon changed for copper in Tangier "had bought eleven quarts of coin, and the head of the firm had gone on the street to negotiate for the balance of the change." There



is a striving after incongruity—an incongruity often secured by treating in a light way things of dignity and importance. Gibraltar from the sea is “suggestive of a ‘gob’ of mud on the end of a shingle.” The much quoted meditation at the tomb of Adam is not irreverent in the sense that it shocks anyone’s religious faith; but it shows a disposition to force mirth on any subject. Even in these early volumes, however, Mark Twain was usually far better than his journalistic contemporaries, and in his best work he was incomparably above them. He took the so-called “American humor”—the humor of excessive statement and juxtaposition of irrelevant ideas—and showed that in the hands of a literary artist it was a form worthy of respect. But in essentials his relationships are always with Artemus Ward rather than with Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The humor in Mark Twain’s later stories is better than that in his earlier works chiefly because it presents a more genuine view of life. When at his best he shows a sure insight into human nature. Compare, on the one hand, the meditation at the tomb of Adam or the well-known experience with the mummy and the Genoa guide from *The Innocents Abroad*, and on the other hand the chapter in which Tom Sawyer whitewashes the fence, or the coarser episode of “The Royal Nonesuch” from *Huckleberry Finn*. The two selections last named are not more refined or more clever than the others, but they rest on a basis of fundamental truth that gives them far greater value.

In his stories, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, and in the first part of *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain pictured the world as

**Mark Twain’s  
Mississippi  
River Tales**

he saw it in boyhood and youth. The plots of his tales are somewhat forced. As a critic he was merciless in his comments on romantic writers, and he attacked Cooper for the improbability of his



incidents. Yet nothing in Cooper is so unlikely as the story of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, with two Italian noblemen running for office in a little Western town, and the discovery after many years that slave and master had been exchanged in their cradles. It would be ungracious to apply the author's criticisms to his own work. In spite of over-ingenuity and the use of trite romantic situations, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is interesting and in parts powerful. Most readers, however, prefer the earlier tales, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. The first, which as has been said is largely autobiographical, has more force, but less unity. It is preëminently a study of boy nature, though there is much on other human nature as well. *Huckleberry Finn* is regarded by many critics as the author's masterpiece. It is as truly humorous as *Tom Sawyer*, but the underlying view of life is more serious, and it suggests more important questions. Especially interesting is the implied commentary on slavery. It has more to do with the Mississippi, and no one else has presented so strongly and sympathetically the elusive fascination of the mighty stream.

It was perhaps the fact that the river affected him so profoundly that led Mark Twain to rank *Life on the Mississippi* as his best work. Yet it may be that he was not far from right. The book contains a few of his finest descriptions—passages which, like others of almost equal excellence in *Huckleberry Finn*, show his response to the subtler appeals of nature, and which, if he had written no humor, might have given him a reputation as a prose poet. No other of his works shows better the power and flexibility of his style, and no other has so much diversity and is at the same time so well sustained. There is no boisterousness, and there is less fun of any sort than in most of his writings, but there is much humor in the true sense of that word. These comments apply only to the chapters

**Life on the  
Mississippi**

which tell of the author's experiences before the war. The last part of the volume is like disjointed and rather uninteresting newspaper correspondence and the effect of anticlimax which it produces is a disappointing reminder of some of Mark Twain's artistic deficiencies.

Of the tales with imaginative and historical settings *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is perhaps the most notable. Those who rank this work

**Mark Twain's  
Medieval Tales**

among the author's best, point to the abundant humor and to the lessons which the story teaches—the selfishness of feudalism and the service of modern science and invention in securing rights to the individual. Those who are less enthusiastic complain that a humor based so purely on burlesque and incongruity is more forced than that of *Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*, and feel that the lessons need no such grotesquely elaborate enforcement. The more conservative are likely to regret, also, that the good in chivalry should not have a more respectful recognition. It is characteristic of Mark Twain that while he had only ridicule for the knights who were accustomed to "go grailing" and gather at the Table Round, he regarded Joan of Arc with the most intense admiration and reverence. His historical novel, *Joan of Arc*, purporting to be the memoirs of the Maid as written by her private secretary, is a serious piece of work. It shows careful historical reading and much pains, but it is not wholly successful or convincing.

If Mark Twain was taken too lightly at first, he was taken seriously, perhaps too seriously, in his later years. Readers

who discovered that he was something more than a newspaper joker began to hail him as a philosopher, and he himself undertook to

**Mark Twain's  
Serious Attempts**

express opinions on a variety of subjects ranging from foreign missions to politics. He attacked Christian Science in a volume which is probably more deeply regretted by his

friends who share his disapprobation of the new sect than by the victims of his ridicule and scorn.

It would be unduly rash to predict at this time the future place of Mark Twain in American literature. It already becomes evident that in his later years and since his death he has been overrated. Little of his ambitiously serious work appears to have the elements of permanency, and it is probable that with change of taste his purely funny writings will seem less and less interesting. He has left, however, a considerable amount of truly genuine work in which the humor is more than cleverness and the seriousness is without affectation; and it will be strange if American readers willingly let this die.

**Mark Twain's  
Rank**

Between the Mississippi and the Pacific slope there was little literary production worthy of notice. Colorado may perhaps lay claim to Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson (1831-1885). She was the daughter of Professor Fiske of Amherst, and was first married to Captain Edward B. Hunt of the United States army. After the death of her husband and children she began to write, and was soon one of the regular contributors to the "Atlantic." The state of her health induced her to remove to Colorado, and here she was later married to William S. Jackson, of Colorado Springs. About 1879 or 1880 she became strongly interested in the wrongs of the Indians, and from that time many of her writings dealt with various aspects of the Indian question. She was a woman of intense and thoroughly genuine personality, violent in her likes and dislikes, and often, though never intentionally, unjust. One of her marked characteristics was a love of wandering, which led her to Europe and many times through favorite parts of America. Her poems, most of them originally published in periodicals, were collected in volumes at various times. Her

**Helen Hunt  
Jackson**

prose included sketches of travel, literary criticism, fiction, stories for children, and miscellaneous essays. For the greater number of her writings she used the signature "H. H.," and later Helen Jackson. The question of her authorship of a series of clever magazine stories signed "Saxe Holme" once aroused much discussion, and was never absolutely settled.

Mrs. Jackson's poems reflect the strong emotions characteristic of her nature. They tell old legends of the church, they

**Helen Jackson's  
Writings**

treat of death and religious consolation, of happy and of unrequited love, and of the delights of nature. Most of them are short and

in lyric measures. They are likely to be over-rich in imagery and to lack calmness and repose. Much of her prose shows the same intensity as her verse. Her early accounts of European travel jumble together valuable matter and trivially uninteresting personal detail, but some of her later sketches, such as "Glimpses of California and the Missions," are charming in both matter and style. *A Century of Dishonor*, an arraignment of the United States government for its treatment of the Indians, was written after conscientious researches in the Astor library, but is a one-sided and almost hysterical presentation of the subject. As a tract it had an immediate effect, but it can hardly add much to the author's permanent literary reputation. Her best prose work, *Ramona*, a story of early life in Southern California, also introduces the wrongs of the Indians, somewhat to the detriment of the novel as a work of art. It abounds in accurate and graphic descriptions, sometimes more detailed than is necessary to give local color. The plot is simple and not wholly artistic. The study of three women in the first part of the book is excellent. The author succeeded in portraying the Indian and the Spaniard better than less passionate and more complex Anglo-Saxon types. The power of the novel is due in part to its intensity

and moral earnestness, in part to the fact that it shows another of the local and distinctive methods of life in America that have been so thoroughly exploited by recent story tellers.

The Pacific slope, like the Ohio valley, developed a literary center of its own which maintained some importance until

**The Pacific Slope** after the completion of trans-continental railroads. Newspapers, literary periodicals, publishing houses, and libraries were all founded in San Francisco soon after the American occupation of California. Between 1850 and 1856 at least three literary magazines were started in the city. More important was the "Overland Monthly," founded in 1868. This was ambitiously modelled after the "Atlantic," and though of course very provincial, had some merit. Many of the articles dealt with Western subjects, but there was also a brave attempt to be cosmopolitan. The contributors to this as to earlier magazines were mostly men of Eastern birth, some of them only temporarily resident in California.

The most distinctive of the California writers was Francis Bret Harte (1839-1902), who after he achieved literary success wrote over the shortened signature of

**Bret Harte**

Bret Harte. He was born in Albany, New York, and received a common school education. His father died while he was still young, and at the age of fifteen he went with his mother to California. He taught school and worked as miner, tax-collector, express messenger, drug clerk, and compositor—all before he was twenty years of age. He contributed to the "Californian," a literary weekly that preceded the "Overland," and as early as 1863 published a Spanish-American tale in the "Atlantic." When the "Overland Monthly" was founded he became its editor, and in the second issue brought out "The Luck of Roaring Camp," his first great success. This was quickly followed by "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" and several other of his best tales,



and by some of his most popular poems, among them "Plain Language from Truthful James," better known as "The Heathen Chinee." These were more highly valued in the East than in California, and in 1871 the author resigned his editorship and the professorship of English literature in the University of California to which he had just been elected, and removed to New York. He contributed to the "Atlantic" and lectured in various parts of the country. In 1878 he was appointed consul at Crefeld, Germany, and two years later was transferred to Glasgow. After his removal from the latter position in 1885 he continued to reside in England until his death. His works include *Condensed Novels*, 1867; *The Luck of Roaring Camp and other Sketches*, 1871; *Tales of the Argonauts and other Sketches*, 1875; and many other collections of short tales; *Gabriel Conroy*, a novel, 1876; *Two Men of Sandy Bar*, a drama, 1876; and several collections of poems, the first published in 1871.

Bret Harte had some conspicuous personal peculiarities which were freely commented upon during his life time, and

**Bret Harte's  
Personality**

not even the work of his latest biographer has made it possible to form a sure estimate of his character. He is said to have been unreliable

in keeping dinner engagements, paying debts, and attending to consular duties. During his later years there was some estrangement between him and his family. On the other hand published letters to his wife and children are charming and apparently genuine. He was welcome in literary and the better social circles of England, and formed warm friendships with Englishmen. He enjoyed children and won their confidence. It seems probable that he suffered from a lack of business aptitude, and of firmness of character, so that without any serious moral delinquencies he alienated some friends and gave his enemies opportunity for malicious attacks.



Life in California in the early fifties was unique. The discovery of gold had attracted great crowds of adventurers, representative of all parts of America and Europe, and of all grades of society and all degrees of education. Their one common characteristic was intense energy; and in the free atmosphere of a new country they were boisterous and unrestrained, even to the point of lawlessness. In contrast to the rawness of this society were the remains of the old, drowsy, Spanish civilization. Still other elements of picturesqueness were added by the Indians and the Chinese. Bret Harte seems to have been greatly impressed by this heterogeneous life as he saw it during the varied experiences of his early years.

**Early  
Californian Life**

**Bret Harte's  
Tales of  
California Life**

His first sketch in the "Atlantic," published in 1863, tells an old Spanish tradition in a thin and Irvingesque manner. Five years later, in "The Luck of Roaring Camp," and the stories that immediately followed it, he turned to the portrayal of rude life in the mining camp. These early short sketches are his best work. They copy some of the less admirable traits of Dickens; they are over-sentimental and somewhat sensational; the conclusions, even in the best stories like "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," are inartistically melodramatic. Nevertheless, they are characterized by individuality, humor, wide sympathy, and truth to the ultimate facts of human nature. If they serve any didactic purpose it is to show that there are some elements of gentleness and goodness in the roughest men and the lowest social outcasts. The heroes and the heroines are often vicious characters, but the author always distinguishes sharply between their heroic qualities and their vices.

After he went abroad Bret Harte continued to write stories of the early life in California. His admirers point out now one and now another of these later sketches as evidence that

his powers had not diminished, but none of these is convincing to the average reader. He had been too long away from the scenes that he described; he had lost too much of his early idealism and enthusiasm and he had come too much under the influence of the conventional in literature. He often took the stock plots of the ordinary story writer and developed them with a California setting that was also becoming formal. He yielded to the latter-day temptation to character analysis, and in this he was unsuccessful. Some of the characters of his earlier stories, such as Oakhurst and Yuba Bill, really live, and Colonel Starbottle is at least an interesting caricature; but even these persons, when he elaborated them in later works, become incomprehensible beings. He had most difficulty in portraying women, and this he rashly undertook in many of the later tales. His few sketches of a more refined civilization are even less successful than the later Western stories, and this fact offers the justification for his persistent adherence to the earlier form of work.

The prose other than the short stories is of less importance. The two series of *Condensed Novels*, one among the earliest and the other among the latest of his writings, are at times clever in their parodies of contemporary fiction, but the cleverness is on the whole specious. The longer stories, especially the novel *Gabriel Conroy*, are failures. The author could no more organize a complex plot than he could analyze a complex character. The same deficiencies led to the failure of his prose drama, "Two Men of Sandy Bar." In this some of the scenes are so far over-done that they seem like burlesque; and the story is confused, improbable, and fails to satisfy a sense of poetic justice.

Though not a great poet Harte was a verse writer of considerable merit. He handled a variety of lyric measures with

**Bret Harte's  
Later Tales**

**Bret Harte's  
Miscellaneous  
Work**

success. He managed the "dramatic monologue" with a great deal of naturalness; and he was able to write dialect verse that was humorous without being cheap.

**Bret Harte's  
Verse**

It is perhaps his humorous poems like "The Heathen Chinees" and "The Society upon the Stanislaus" that are best known; but some of the sentimental and mildly pathetic pieces like "Her Letter" and "Dickens in Camp" are almost as popular. "Jim," his best dramatic monologue, blends humor and pathos. His patriotic and some of his juvenile poems are smooth and effective. Little of his work is distinctly imitative, but there are suggestions of divers poets, among them Longfellow, Emerson, and Browning.

Bret Harte is said to have been fastidious in matters of diction and to have spared no pains to secure the proper word and phrase. He lacked somewhat, how-

**Bret Harte's  
Rank**

ever, in sense for style; and his style did not improve with years. Yet in spite of all artistic defects some of his work is too strong and too genuine to be lost. In his lifetime he probably did not receive due recognition at home. At first California resented his sketches and feared that the East would accept them as a complete picture of Western civilization. Later the East, which had welcomed him, grew sensitive lest the vogue of his books abroad might give Englishmen a wrong idea of America. It now seems that he is assured of a permanent place among American story writers, though the amount of work for which he will ultimately be remembered may be small.

The most gifted California writer of a slightly later date was Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887). He was born in Connecticut and was graduated at Yale.

**Edward  
Rowland Sill**

From 1861 to 1866 he was engaged in business on the Pacific coast. He then returned East, studied a few months in Harvard divinity school, did

editorial work on a New York paper, and taught in an Ohio academy. From 1871 to 1874 he was instructor in the Oakland, California, high school, and from 1874 to 1882 was professor of English literature in the University of California. The last four years of his life were spent in Ohio, where he was engaged in literary work. His writings were contributed to the magazines, especially to the "Atlantic Monthly," and most of them were published anonymously. The only volumes issued in his lifetime were a small collection of poems published in 1867, and another privately printed for his friends when he left California in 1883. Since his death there have been published three small volumes of his poems, and a volume of prose, all, or almost all, gathered from the magazines.

Sill was a New England idealist who never succeeded in putting his mind at rest regarding the problems and doubts which the nineteenth century brought to thinking men. His poems present, not doubt overcome by faith, as in Tennyson, nor doubt accepted with a resignation that becomes half pleasurable, as in Arnold, but the real doubt of a sensitive and conscientious man who continues to question the universe. They are individual poems, and reveal a personality of great sweetness, naturalness, and human sympathy. His best known short poem, "A Fool's Prayer," has an epigrammatic quality. "The Venus of Milo," his best poem of moderate length, blends with the spirit of the later nineteenth century something of the spirit of Keats. "The Hermitage," his longest poem, has some fine passages and much microscopic description of nature, but taken as a whole is not strong. His prose, which is mostly in the form of brief essays, has the same charm as his poetry, and sometimes a lightness that most of the poetry lacks. His limitations in both prose and verse are obvious, but he will continue to attract a small circle of persons whose intellectual experiences

fit them to understand his own, and who read him closely enough to come in sympathy with his fine personality.

Of living writers in California who attained a reputation before 1883, Cincinnatus Hiner Miller, who writes as "Joaquin Miller," is the most distinctive. He has written prose fiction, but is known especially for his vigorous verse. Miss Ina D. Coolbrith has written poems, the best of them lyrical.

**Living  
California  
Writers**

## CHAPTER V

### RECENT YEARS (1883-1912)

A WORK which does not consider living authors in detail can give little more than a general discussion of the literary achievements of the last thirty years. Besides the survivors from the earlier time, whose work has been discussed in the preceding chapter, there have arisen many American writers of merit, but few of obvious distinction. Periods of mediocrity are likely to intervene between major creative periods, and it may be that the next generation will see great and original achievement; but the signs of the new time are not yet sufficiently plain to justify prophecy.

An important phenomenon of the last twenty-five years has been the loss of literary prestige by New England, without the corresponding development of any other literary center. Boston is still the seat of important educational and publishing interests, and the home of much culture. New York, as the chief commercial center, leads in the magazine and book publishing industries, and offers the greatest attractions to those who are interested in the drama and other arts. But though the majority of American writers visit New York, contribute to New York magazines, and publish with New York houses, no great proportion of them live in the city, and there is no very distinctive New York school of writers. Other cities, notably Philadelphia and Chicago, have literary interests of importance. The tendency seems to be, however, to concentrate publishing in the East, especially in New York, but to leave authors scattered throughout the country. This is a



natural result of modern means of communication, and the modern dissemination of books. Diversity of residence and ease of communication make possible the expression of minor sectional traits, and at the same time an increase in the homogeneity of national literature.

Another interesting fact is the development of periodicals in such a way as to change the relation between author and reader. In an earlier day magazines were supported directly by their readers, and could pay their contributors only in proportion to the amount received from subscriptions. In commercial phrase, the magazine stood in the position of middleman between the producer and the consumer of literature. With the development of modern business methods magazines are supported by advertising, and in some cases subscriptions form a relatively small source of income. The manager may care for a large circulation more on account of the greater advantages in advertising contracts than on account of the money received from the sale of copies. He is in danger of regarding the literary contents as in itself an advertising feature, and of choosing contributors for their advertising value. It is true that all magazine editors are on the alert for the desirable work of any new author; but it is also true that many of them are willing to pay a popular writer his own price for anything, good or bad, that bears his name. As a result authors of established reputation are sorely tempted to allow the publication of hasty and ill considered works. More serious is the fact that even the better magazines are forced by competition to supply novelties, and to accept material that is striking and speciously attractive, rather than that which is sound. Since a much larger proportion of writings than ever before are first published in magazines, these facts are of serious importance.

Modern processes of illustration also influence writings in-

### **Changes in Magazines**

tended for magazines, and to a lesser extent those published in books. They have already revolutionized the literature of travel; so that the up-to-date traveller's narrative is no longer a series of graphic descriptions and interesting incidents, but a thin letter-press commentary on the work of his camera, or maybe of his brush and pencil. It is hard to believe, too, that some of the stories published by magazines are not accepted because they lend themselves to illustration rather than for their literary qualities.

These changed conditions are by no means unmixed evils; nor are their concomitants, the middleman between author and publisher, and the syndicate of periodicals. They do, however, affect the circumstances of publication so seriously that they must affect the method and quality of literary production. Whether the sum of their influences is for good or for bad it is now too soon to say.

It is in accordance with the spirit of the time that recent tendencies in novel writing are in the direction of realism and character analysis. There have been occasional violent reactions in the direction of ultra-romanticism, and about the close of the century the country suffered from an epidemic of hastily written historical novels. The two most distinguished living American novelists, William Dean Howells and Henry James, stand, however, for the study and portrayal of things as they are.

#### **Tendency Toward Realism**

In the recent development of the short story as a distinct literary form America has done its full share, and more; and perhaps American writers of short stories are relatively more distinguished than American authors in any other field of literature. The increasing number of magazines offers opportunities for the publication of short stories, and short stories in turn help to make the magazines possible and popular. Many young persons with

#### **The Short Story**

literary interests have found time to attempt the briefer form when circumstances would have prevented them from writing an old-fashioned two volume novel; and though this has led to the production of an immense amount of experimental and mediocre work, it has developed a few writers who might not otherwise have discovered their capabilities. During the last few years the short story has come to be regarded as a worthy form of fiction with laws of its own, and its technique is now being studied by many critics. A notable characteristic of recent short story writing in America is the use of "local color." Almost every distinctive community and mode of life in the country has been exploited by story tellers. Among the many writers who have made special fields their own are Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman for New England, George W. Cable for the Louisiana Creoles, Mary M. Murfree (Charles Egbert Craddock) for the Tennessee mountains, F. Hopkinson Smith for some aspects of the South, Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris for the Southern negro, James Lane Allen for Kentucky, Hamlin Garland and Owen Wister for certain features of life in the middle West and the Southwest, respectively. Not only different sections of the country, but occupations which have distinctive peculiarities are drawn upon for settings for short stories.

The valuable achievement of the last quarter-century in poetry has been small. The best work has been done by

#### Poetry

writers who made their reputation before 1883. The fashion has set toward short and epigrammatic lyrics, and few poems on an ambitious scale have been attempted. The Americans who have had most influence on their latest successors are Emerson and Whitman. There are many experiments in the manner of European poets and of other times, but there is little that seems a high and genuine expression of to-day.

An increasing number of younger men have been tempted to the writing of plays, and some of them have produced work admirably suited to effective presentation by the complex art of the modern stage. **The Drama** There have, however, been no dramas of the first literary rank, and few of the second. The perpetual demand for sensational plays has been filled by melodramas which stage-craft is able to make more lurid than ever before; but the tendency in the drama, as in prose fiction, is toward realism. It may be partly as a result of that tendency that the successful acting plays written within the last few years have been almost all in prose.

Within recent years there have been many writers of good prose essays, but none of preëminent distinction. The sharp differentiation of the short story from the **Essays** essay has modified the latter, and no recent writings are of the same order as some of the most charming work of Addison, Lamb, and Irving. Essays on various aspects of nature-study have become popular, and discussions of literary and artistic matters are more widely read than ever before. In the better newspapers lighter discussions of social questions and of evils of the day have been more refined and more truly humorous than formerly. Though these can hardly be classed as literature their improvement indicates better popular taste.

With the development of modern ideals of scholarship the writings of scholars take less and less rank as literature. **Scholarship** Thoroughness of investigation and impartiality of statement are the chief merits of the monograph or treatise; and many investigators seem to fear that literary graces are to be shunned lest they seduce the writer from accuracy in the presentation of facts. For this reason few of the many able scientists and historians of recent years need be mentioned in this volume.

On account of the increased homogeneity of the country and the great frequency of migrations, classification of authors according to location is less easy and far less significant in this period than in those that have preceded. In New England, where the literary life has fortunately been conducive to longevity, Edward Everett Hale, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Julia Ward Howe, J. T. Trowbridge, and Donald G. Mitchell, all contributors to the "Atlantic" in its early days, continued to write until well into the twentieth century; and so did Harriet Prescott Spofford, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, slightly younger members of the "Atlantic" group. Among surviving writers who entered the field later are Julia C. R. Dorr, of Vermont, who has written popular verse, Arthur Sherburne Hardy, of New Hampshire, who has published several novels and miscellaneous essays, and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, of Massachusetts, who has written short stories. Winston Churchill, one of the most popular of later novelists, lives in New Hampshire. Margaret W. Deland, poet and novelist, has been a resident of Boston since 1880, though she was a native of Pennsylvania. The relative importance of women in the literary life of New England is an interesting fact.

One of the most interesting writers of verse who no longer survives is Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), who was born and spent her life in Amherst, Massachusetts. **Emily Dickinson** Though a woman of grace and social accomplishment she voluntarily lived almost as a recluse. Only three or four of her poems were published during her lifetime, and not even her closest friends realized her power, or knew of the amount of excellent work that she was storing away in her portfolio. The three little volumes of verse published after her death abound in short startling bits of self-revelation and incisive comments on life. Though uneven,



as secret poetical work is almost sure to be, they show unquestionable genius. The author had humor, insight, and an unusual power of terse and well rounded expression. Her *Letters* are interesting, but are disappointing in that they give so little clue to her personality.

Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) began to write before 1883, though most of her work was done later. She was a descendant of old and cultured New England families, and was born at South Berwick, Maine, where her father was a doctor with a large country practice. As a member of a physician's family Miss Jewett had an exceptional opportunity to know intimately the lives of persons of all social grades. During her early womanhood the summer boarder was beginning to frequent the vicinity of South Berwick, and it was with a kindly hope of interpreting her humbler neighbors to these visitors that she began to write. Her first sketches were printed in the "Atlantic Monthly." *Deephaven*, her first novel, appeared in 1877, but is said to have been written earlier. After the publication of *Deephaven* she continued to write abundantly, producing a novel or a volume of short stories almost every year. Most of her work portrays New England life, and she is at her best in the representation of placid existence in a manner that frequently invites comparisons with *Cranford*. *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is probably her best novel.

Constance Fenimore Woolson (1838-1894), a niece of James Fenimore Cooper, illustrates the migratory tendency that makes geographical grouping of authors difficult. She was born in New Hampshire, was educated in Cleveland and New York city, for several years spent her winters in Florida, and after 1879 lived mostly in Italy. She fairly belongs, however, to New Hampshire. She began to write

**Sarah Orne  
Jewett**

**Constance  
Fenimore  
Woolson**



fiction about 1870 and continued until her death. Most of her work, which consisted of both short stories and novels, was first published in "Harper's Magazine," and much of it was afterward reprinted in book form. She is distinguished from the mass of magazine short story writers by her close observation and careful workmanship, but she hardly had genius.

New York has attracted a large number of writers, many of whom are or have been connected with literary periodicals.

#### **New York Writers**

Possibly this association with journalism may have encouraged the tendency to mild Bohemianism which many of them have shown or affected. No single characteristic, not even Bohemianism, is, however, common to them all. There is really no later New York school.

Henry Cuyler Bunner (1855-1896) was a native of Oswego, New York, but passed all his life after early manhood in the city. From 1877 until his death he was

#### **Henry Cuyler Bunner**

editor of "Puck," and expended much of his energy in the difficult task of seriously influencing public opinion through the editorial articles of a comic paper. He also wrote stories and verses which prove his good humor and cleverness and which show a deft literary touch. Among his prose volumes are *Short Sixes*, 1890; *Zadoc Pine and other Stories*, 1891; *Love in Old Cloathes and other Stories*, 1896; the longer *Story of a New York House*, 1887, and *Made in France*, a volume of translations, 1893. There is humor in all of these, though they are by no means "funny stories." The best of them are charmingly told. Two volumes of verse, *Airs from Arcady* and *Rowen*, appeared during the author's lifetime, and after his death a collection of his poems. He is best in parody of the finer sort and in society verse. Some of his more delicate lyrics show the influence of Herrick and perhaps of Austin Dobson.

Laurence Hutton (1843-1904) was a native of New York city, and though he travelled much abroad and during his latest years lived at Princeton, New Jersey, was always associated with the literary life of the metropolis. For a number of years he conducted the department of "Literary Notes" in "Harper's Magazine," he contributed to other periodicals, and he is said to have written or edited nearly fifty volumes. His chief interests were in literature and the stage. Many of his books deal with actors and the theatre, others are literary reminiscence and minor criticism. His *Literary Landmarks of London*, a carefully prepared guide to places of literary interest, was followed by similar volumes on Edinburgh, Paris, and other cities. He had an attractive personality, and his writings were pleasant reading to his contemporaries; but his more ambitious works hardly show the scholarship that will make them last, and his lighter prose is too informal to survive the traditions of the man himself.

Francis Richard Stockton (1834-1902), who wrote as Frank R. Stockton, was born in Philadelphia and began journalistic work in that city, but during most of his literary career was connected with "Scribner's Monthly" and "St. Nicholas" in New York. His reputation was achieved rather late in life. He published a volume of stories in 1870, but it was not until some years later that the "Rudder Grange" group, and especially "The Lady or the Tiger," brought him general recognition. He wrote voluminously, and during the last thirty years of his life published more than forty volumes. He was a quiet humorist of the ingenious and quizzical order, and was most successful in portraying with apparent seriousness unusual or impossible situations. "The Lady or the Tiger," his best known story, is a new type of hoax. He is likely to be remembered chiefly for this and for a few more of his

best short stories. His novels, *The Late Mrs. Null*, *The Hundredth Man*, and others, several collections of juvenile tales, and such compilations as *Stories of New Jersey* and *Buccaneers and Pirates of our Coasts* are respectable work, but have little enduring quality.

Among essayists and miscellaneous writers still living in New York, or closely connected with the city, are Lyman Abbott, whose chief interest is in religious and sociological questions; Henry van Dyke, now of Princeton University, preacher, poet, and essayist; John Burroughs, who writes on the study of nature; and Hamilton W. Mabie, Brander Matthews, and George E. Woodberry, who discuss questions of literature. Professors Matthews and Woodberry are also known as writers of verse, and Professor Matthews has written clever short stories. Theodore Roosevelt has written on a variety of topics, especially history and manly sports. William Winter has written important dramatic criticisms. Edith Wharton, one of the latest writers of prose fiction, was born in New York and her literary associations are chiefly with this city. Among New York writers should also be mentioned Francis Hopkinson Smith, author of many delightful stories, though by birth and temperament he belongs with the South. Henry James, the most distinguished American novelist resident abroad, has his chief American associations with New York. Mr. James has created the "international novel," in which he represents a cosmopolitan group of characters, each somewhat at loss to understand the other's points of view.

This is perhaps the best place to notice Francis Marion Crawford (1854-1909), whose literary relationships, at least in a business way, were also with New York. Though he spent most of his life abroad he was of the purest American ancestry. He was descended from General Francis Marion of Revolutionary

**Living New  
York Writers**

**F. Marion  
Crawford**

fame, and his father was a noted American sculptor. His mother was a sister of Julia Ward Howe. He was born in Italy and remained there until his twelfth year. He received part of his preparatory schooling at Concord, Massachusetts; attended in turn the Universities of Cambridge, Heidelberg, and Rome; visited India, whither he was drawn by his interest in Sanscrit; and returned for a time to America, where he studied at Harvard and began his literary career. He soon went abroad again and lived most of the time in Italy. During the later years of his life he owned a villa overlooking the sea at Sorrento.

Crawford gained some acquaintance with journalism in India, but his first serious writing was done while he was at

**Crawford's  
Writings**

Harvard. *Mr. Isaacs*, which appeared in 1882 and attracted great attention, was a story of the East Indian life which still had a strong

hold on his imagination. From this time he wrote incessantly until his death. Hardly a year went by without its volume from his pen, and some years yielded two or more. This rapidity could hardly be conducive to the most finished workmanship, though it must be owned that his stories rarely show obvious marks of haste. He attempted a few stories with American settings, but after *Mr. Isaacs* the scenes of his best tales were laid in Europe. *A Cigarette-Maker's Romance*, one of the most finished of his shorter novels, is a story of Russian exiles in Munich. The action of many of his most popular stories takes place, naturally, in Italy. Among these Italian tales are *A Roman Singer*, *Saracinesca*, *Sant' Ilario*, and *Don Orsino*, the last three forming a trilogy which traces the fortunes of a group of Roman characters during the troubled times after the fall of the papal power. All his books are readable; and it would be difficult to choose a restricted list of the best to which his admirers would agree. Besides fiction he wrote some popular historical works,

*Rulers of the South, Ave Roma Immortalis, and Salve Venetia*; and an interesting essay, "The Novel—What Is It?"

In the essay just named Crawford defined the novel as a "pocket theatre," and took his stand firmly with the

romanticists as opposed to the realists. His  
**Crawford's Ideas of Fiction** plots are, indeed, romantic; and his characters are unusual in either personality or situation;

but every character acts from comprehensible motives, and the backgrounds of his stories are pictured with the greatest accuracy of detail. He was a keen observer, and he had the interest in arts and crafts and the manual dexterity in mastering them that was once considered an American trait. He could picture a cobbler's shop or a cigarette maker's workroom as accurately as the scenes of higher life. He also succeeded as few men do in being really cosmopolitan, so that even the citizens of the various countries where he placed his plots bear witness that he had actually entered into their life, and for the time being looked from their point of view. He was, too, a born story teller, who never let the peculiarities of his characters or the vividness of his backgrounds obscure the interest in the story itself. As a result his characters, even the most romantic of them, seem to live, and the action of his novels leaves an impression of reality which is more lasting than that of most romantic stories.

Marion Crawford was not a great novelist, but he ranked very high among writers of clean, genuine, interesting tales. With perhaps one exception he is the most cosmopolitan of American writers. His style, notwithstanding his hasty composition, is always clear and dignified.

Considerably younger than most of the men already named were Richard Hovey, Stephen Crane, and Paul Leicester Ford. Richard Hovey (1864-1900) was born

➤ **Richard Hovey** in Illinois, was graduated at Dartmouth, and after studying for the ministry changed his plans and became

journalist, actor, and finally professor of English literature in Barnard college. His poems are varied in form and kind; they show such diverse influences as Whitman, Emerson, Kipling, and the later French poets, and they attempt many Greek and other unusual metres. His most ambitious work was *Launcelot and Guenevere, a Poem in Dramas*, of which he published four parts, "The Quest of Merlin, a Masque;" "The Marriage of Guenevere, a Tragedy;" "The Birth of Galahad, a Romantic Drama;" and "Taliesin, a Masque." The last of these is a mystical allegory of the poet in his relation to life, and has some lyrics that are almost fine, though they never quite sing themselves. In the earlier parts, especially, there is often a conscious striving and a lack of perfect touch and taste. In moral tone the poem represents the reaction against the exaltation of the domestic virtues in the *Idyls of the King*, and Launcelot is made the chief hero. The admirers of the poet ranked *Launcelot and Guenevere* high, and it is certainly a work of promise. If Hovey had lived he might have done better things on the grand scale. As it is, his best work is probably some of his less ambitious lyrics, many of which appeared in *Songs from Vagabondia*, which he published jointly with his friend Bliss Carman. As the title of this volume implies, his lighter verses have freedom and something of Bohemianism, but it is the Bohemianism of the open air rather than that of the city beer cellar. At the time of the Spanish-American war Hovey wrote several patriotic pieces, of which "Unmanifest Destiny" is the best.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900) attended Lafayette college and Syracuse university, and served as war correspondent during the Græco-Turkish and the Spanish-American wars. For the last two years of his life he made his home in England. His stories, especially "The Red Badge of Courage," attracted great attention,



especially in England, where they won high praise from conservative critics. Since his death his reputation has faded and it is doubtful if it will be revived. He had the reporter's knack of seeing the striking fact and stating it in the picturesque way, and he had something of the literary artist's technique and sense of form; but his work lacked repose and perfect taste. His poems, some of which appeared in a volume, *War is Kind*, show the influence of Whitman.

Paul Leicester Ford (1865-1902), a native of Brooklyn, besides important work as editor, biographer, and bibliographer, wrote several novels. Among these were

**Paul Leicester  
Ford**

*The Honorable Peter Stirling, The Great K.  
and A. Train Robbery, and Janice Meredith.*

The last, a story of the Revolution, is a conscientious historical novel, and appeared in 1899, just as this class of fiction was temporarily in vogue. *The Honorable Peter Stirling* was obviously based on facts in the life of Grover Cleveland. In spite of glaring faults in both style and construction it is a graphic, realistic story and will remain as a valuable study of some aspects of American life.

During recent years as in the past Philadelphia has maintained publishing interests of importance, and has been a center of quiet, conservative culture. Among

**Philadelphia  
Writers**

living authors associated with the city are Dr,  
Silas Weir Mitchell, author of several novels

and poems, as well as technical and semi-technical works; Owen Wister, whose best work in fiction deals with the West and the Southwest; Agnes Repplier, the author of many suggestive essays, and Horace Howard Furness, the Shakespearean scholar.

Since the trials and uncertainties of the reconstruction period Southerners have turned to literature as never before. The greater number of Southern authors have written fiction, especially stories which portray aspects of provincial life

\* Died, June, 1912. at Wallingford

with which they are familiar; but the South has produced, during the last twenty-five years, at least its fair share of workers in all departments of literature.

#### The South

Even the "Atlantic Monthly" was for a time in editorial charge of a man of Southern birth. Most of these writers are still living and can only be mentioned here; but when the future history of American literature is written this infusion of the Southern element is sure to give the material for an interesting and instructive chapter.

In Maryland Richard Malcolm Johnston (1822-1898), a native of Georgia and long the head of a boys' school near

#### Maryland and Virginia Writers

Baltimore, was the author of some excellent short stories. He was nearly sixty years of age before he wrote much, but he gained his greatest success in portraying the "cracker" life of Georgia which he had known in his youth. Several of the best of the Georgia stories were grouped together as *The Dukesborough Tales*. John B. Tabb (1845-1909), a native of Virginia and long instructor in English literature in a Roman Catholic college near Baltimore, was the author of many quatrains, sonnets, and other brief lyrics. Father Tabb's range was narrow, but his exquisite bits of verse show a genuineness of feeling and a perfection of form that has rarely been equalled by minor American poets. Maurice Francis Egan, of Washington, author of many tales and essays, still survives. Thomas Nelson Page, of Virginia, still writes delightful stories, in the best of which the oldtime darkey is a prominent character.

In Georgia Joel Chandler Harris (1848-1908) wrote tales based on the folklore of the negroes. As a boy he learned the printer's trade in the office of a literary periodical published by a wealthy Georgia planter on his estate, and here when his work was over he listened to the superstitious stories of the slaves. Later, when he was on the editorial staff of the

"Atlanta Constitution," he created the character of Uncle Remus, an old-fashioned negro into whose mouth he put his tales. These early Uncle Remus sketches were

**Georgia Writers**  
—**Joel Chandler**  
**Harris**

unique, and they are among the most interesting and valuable contributions of the South to national literature. Like many newspaper writers who attain great popularity Harris worked too fast, and is said to have published twenty-six volumes of different sorts between 1880 and 1897, besides performing his editorial duties during that time. Much of this work is relatively unimportant; and even the later Uncle Remus stories are inferior to their predecessors, partly, perhaps, because the author tried to make them more accurately representative of real negro folklore. As illustrative of a different phase of Southern development mention should perhaps be made of Henry W. Grady (1850-1889), a native of Georgia, a graduate of the University of Georgia, and for some time editor of the "Atlanta Constitution." Though none of his work is likely to live as literature he is one of the best illustrations of the development of new and promising intellectual tendencies in the section which he represented.

The Western and Southwestern states of the Old South have also had their share of writers. Among those still living

**Southwestern**  
**Writers**

is Mary N. Murfree, of Tennessee, who writes over the name of Charles Egbert Craddock. Her work consists largely of the portrayal, in short stories, of life in the less progressive regions of her state. Another writer of short stories, Frances Hodgson Burnett, is a native of England, but for some time resided in Tennessee, and may fairly be assigned to that state. In Louisiana George W. Cable has effectively portrayed Creole life in novels and short tales.

It is doubtful whether Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) can fairly be claimed as an American writer; yet he lived for

some time in New Orleans, and it is probable that it was here that he developed his individual style; and he always published in America. He was born in the **Lafcadio Hearn** Ionian islands, the son of an Irishman serving as surgeon in the British army, and a Greek mother. He was educated in preparation for the priesthood, part of the time in a boys' school in Paris. At the age of nineteen he came to America and was reporter on a Cincinnati paper. Afterward he went to New Orleans, where he did newspaper work and wrote tales and sketches. Between 1887 and 1890 he spent considerable time in the West Indies, and did some journalistic work in New York. In 1890 he went to Japan under contract with a magazine to furnish correspondence, but remained to become a teacher in the University of Tokio, to marry a Japanese wife and become a naturalized citizen of the empire, to accept, nominally at least, Buddhism, and to direct that his body be cremated according to Buddhist rites.

Hearn's best work before he went to Japan consisted of sketches of life and scenes along the Gulf of Mexico and in the West Indies. In his later years he published many books on Japan and Japanese life and thought. The Japanese themselves gave him credit for gaining a better insight into the national character than any other English speaking writer. His prose style was the result of careful, conscientious effort. In his earlier sketches it was characterized by richness and over-luxuriousness, and by wonderful picturing power. In his books on Japan this exuberance was somewhat restrained, and though his style was always strongly adjectival, many passages in his later work have great excellence of form.

In wealth, in the dissemination of that intelligence that is almost but not quite culture, and in the development of higher education the middle West has made great advance in

the last twenty-five years. The literary importance of the section has not, however, increased proportionally. This is

due to several causes. Much of the upper  
**The West**

Mississippi valley is now in that prosperous but unpoetic state of development which must intervene between the picturesqueness of pioneer days and the picturesqueness of an old civilization. The commercial rather than the artistic ideal dominates the West, even in education. The state universities, the most important institutions of higher learning, are forced by public sentiment to lay most stress on "practical" branches of knowledge. Many cities have good libraries, and some of them creditable monuments, art galleries, and musical organizations; but these are often supported by men of wealth who realize the value of a culture that they do not themselves understand, and are enjoyed by women, or by men who have developed the esthetic at the expense of other faculties. The most important reason, however, why the West cuts so small a figure in the literary world is that the majority of Western writers of merit associate themselves sooner or later with the East.

Ohio may fairly lay claim to Edith Thomas, one of the better living writers of verse. A reminder of the eagerness

with which parts of Ohio took up the cause of  
**Ohio Writers** the black man is found in the fact that Paul L. Dunbar (1872-1906), a colored writer who achieved considerable success in both prose and poetry, was born and educated in that state.

Indiana has developed a school of writers several of whom have become widely popular, though they have never been taken very seriously by critics. Wallace and

**Indiana Writers** Hay have been mentioned in the preceding chapter. The most notable living representative is James  
 7 Whitcomb Riley, an especially popular writer of humorous and sentimental poems, largely in dialect. George Ade, L

author of dramas, stories, essays, and much miscellaneous humorous work, is a native of Indiana, though his training as a writer was gained in Chicago. Maurice Thompson (1844-1901) was born and passed the greater part of his life in Indiana, but his early manhood was spent in the South, and he served through the war in the Confederate army. Later he was railway engineer, lawyer, politician, state geologist of Indiana, and for many years non-resident editor of the "New York Independent." His published writings include fiction, poetry, books of archery and other sports, popular studies in natural science, literary essays, and history. Considering the quantity and the variety it is good, but the facility with which the author wrote and a certain lack of training and restraint interfered with his success.

Chicago, the metropolis and the leading commercial city of the West, is naturally a bookselling and publishing center of some importance. **Chicago Writers** Chicago newspapers, though they bear a reputation for sensationalism, are energetically and ably edited. Two or three publishers issue respectable lists of books; and for some years the "Dial" has been recognized as one of the best critical journals in the country. Hamlin Garland, whose most realistic stories are of life in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Dakota, has many associations with the Chicago writers. Harriet Mann Miller, who writes sketches on nature and miscellaneous essays over the signature of Olive Thorne Miller, was for some time a resident of the city. Peter Dunne, the creator of "Mr. Dooley," began his humorous sketches while employed on a Chicago paper. These writers form no school, and not even a group except in a purely geographical sense.

Eugene Field (1850-1895), the most important writer yet distinctly associated with Chicago, was born in Saint Louis of New England parentage. His mother died when he was very young, and he grew to manhood under the charge of



relatives in Vermont. After spending a few months each at Williams college, Knox college, and the University of Missouri he became engaged to the fourteen-year-old sister of a friend, and partly to pass the time until she was of marriageable age went abroad. He returned after he had exhausted all that was available of his patrimony, married, and became a newspaper man in Saint Joseph, Saint Louis, Kansas City, and Denver, successively. In 1833 he went to Chicago to take charge of a special column in the "Daily News," afterward the "Record." This column, which he entitled "Sharps and Flats," he continued with slight interruption until his death.

According to his friends and associates Field was an unusually lovable, convivial, impecunious, and irresponsible newspaper man, a great practical joker, always perpetrating hoaxes on his friends and on public characters of whatever dignity or position. He was fond of writing reports of imaginary speeches, and reviews of imaginary books, and anecdotes of imaginary children, which he assigned to persons more or less in the public eye; and these were often propounded with such seriousness as to deceive all but the most sophisticated readers. Until he went to Chicago he had read little and cared little for literature. There he became interested in the old romances and ballads, and later in Horace. It was still later that he became addicted to the book collecting of which he says so much in his writings.

Almost everything preserved in Field's collected works appeared first in the "Sharps and Flats" column. His first books, *The Tribune Primer*, published in Denver in 1882, and *Culture's Garland*, Boston, 1887, are both slight and humorous, and of interest chiefly to collectors. In 1889 he issued *A Little Book of Profitable Tales* and *A Little Book of Western Verse*. Subsequent prose

#### Eugene Field

#### Field's Character

#### Field's Writings

volumes include more tales, *The House*, a series of sketches based on the author's experiences in securing and fitting up his own residence, and *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*. The two last named had appeared in detached parts in the "Sharps and Flats" column, and neither was finished at the time of the author's death. Of the other volumes of verse the most notable are *Songs of Childhood*, and *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*, a series of half-translations and half-parodies of Horace, written by Eugene Field and his brother Roswell Martin Field.

The chief characteristics of all Field's works are geniality, humor, sentimentality, and a tendency to imitation and parody, in the broader sense of these terms.

**Characteristics  
of Field's Works**

When he became interested in the romances and ballads he made free use, in both prose and verse, of a rudely manufactured Old English dialect; and in many of his stories he imitates the tone and manner of the old tales. At later periods the influence of Christopher North, of Father Prout, and of Beranger is seen in his work. He also had a tendency, explained perhaps by the necessity of furnishing a stint of copy each day, to imitate or repeat himself. Once started on songs for children he wrote not only English, but Scotch, Irish, Dutch, and Japanese lullabies. The theme of the death of a child, which he handled with popular success in "Little Boy Blue," recurs again and again. His prose tales, though in some way they always impress the reader as the expression of a charming personality, are mostly too artificial and too much overcharged with sentiment to take the highest rank. His discursive essays, like *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*, though immeasurably above ordinary newspaper work, show the lack of that deep scholarship and broad culture that lie back of the greatest informal literary discussions. Much of his verse is ephemeral by nature of the subject; much of it is only cleverly

and rather cheaply humorous. Of this sort is "The Little Peach," which for a few years was sung or recited by half the comedians in the country. His more sentimental poems are effective, but often show a touch of artificiality. Even "Little Boy Blue," probably the most popular of all, suggests the use of pathos as literary capital. His best work was in his poems for children, which include such fanciful lullabies as "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod," and "The Hush-a-bye Lady," and such semi-humorous appreciations of childish feeling as "Seein' Things at Night."

Eugene Field's importance in American literary history comes not from the value of what he wrote, but from his relation to the West and to his occupation as journalist. Though he owed much to New England, he was a thorough Westerner. He declined time after time remunerative offers from Eastern newspapers because the East oppressed him. His view of life, of books, of culture was that of the section in which he lived. Moreover, he furnishes the best illustration that the country has yet produced of the possible relations between the daily newspaper and the man of letters. Not only jokes, hoaxes, poems, and tales, but book-lore and translations of Horace were first offered to the patrons of a Chicago daily, at least nine tenths of whom probably read "Sharps and Flats" with persistent interest. The fact that he planned his writings for the masses explains many of the weaknesses of Field's work, but it is by no means certain that it does not account for many of its excellences. He wrote for popular readers, but his individuality was so strong that he refused to follow the obvious popular demand, and he gave to the man on the street glimpses of subjects that are usually associated with higher literary culture. Opinions will differ as to whether or not this was a desirable achievement; but more than any other recent American Eugene

**Field's  
Importance**

Field raises questions as to the future democracy of literature.

William Vaughn Moody (1869-1910) was a native of Indiana and a graduate of Harvard with the class of 1893. In

**William Vaughn  
Moody**

1895 he was called to the faculty of the University of Chicago, and was nominally connected with that institution until his death, though for the last three years of his life he did little or no regular teaching. *The Masque of Judgment*, published in 1900, and especially *Poems*, 1901, were hailed by many critics as works of unusual promise. A few pieces, notably the "Ode in Time of Hesitation," have a sure and sustained manner that has rarely been attained in the last three decades. In the remaining years of his life the poet did not quite fulfill the hopes of his friends. He published *The Fire-Bringer* in 1904, and then turned his attention to the writing of plays. His prose drama, "The Great Divide," attained great success on the stage, and his second play, "The Faith Healer," had some merit. Just before his death it seemed that he might accomplish still greater things both as a poet and as a dramatist.

Farther West than Chicago literary production in recent years has been less important. To Iowa belongs Alice French,

**Writers of the  
Farther West**

who writes, as Octave Thanet, stories of Western life. On the Pacific slope H. H. Bancroft is engaged in businesslike fashion in preparing the history of the West. Here, too, John Vance Cheney wrote his best known poems.



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